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WALDO TRENCH AND OTHERS

HENRY·B·FULLER

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WALDO TRENCH AND OTHERS

STORIES OF AMERICANS IN ITALY

BY

HENRY B. FULLER

Author of "The Chevalier of Pensieri-Vani," "With the Procession," "The Last Refuge," etc.

WITHDRAWN

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1908

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WALDO TRENCH REGAINS HIS YOUTH

WALDO TRENCH REGAINS HIS YOUTH

I

WALDO TRENCH, I take it, was one of the youngest things that ever happened. These few pages, from the note-book of a middle-aged observer, will tell how he grew older; then how, through the application of *force majeure* at a critical stage of his career, he became young again.

When I say that Trench was young, I mean, in large part, that he was new, that he was fresh—using this latter word in its "good" sense; nay, in its best. For Trench, in his twenty-sixth year, still retained an extraordinary susceptibility to new impressions.

His newness was perhaps less a matter of experience (or lack of experience) than of environment. Regarding this environment copious particulars bubbled to the surface through the twelve dragging days that the *Macedonia* required to get us from the Jersey water-front to the harbor of Genoa. Had I but known something of Trench's early surroundings on the occasion of my first encounter with him,

the day before the *Macedonia* sailed, I might have come forward more quickly with my tribute (slight as it was) of indulgence and sympathy.

Now, I am of course "city-broke," as Trench himself would quaintly express it. Still there are times when the roar of the metropolis becomes too strong for the most accustomed ears, and when a step aside from the tumult of Broadway seems necessary if the human mechanism is to endure any longer. Such a moment came to me as I was returning from my final negotiations with the steamship agents. I had almost reached the Post-office when a spire, a portico, and a huddle of gravestones united in saying: "Pause and rest." The day was warm, the clamor of traffic was outrageous; the church offered me a "retreat," and I entered.

For a minute or two I thought I had those bland, smug, shadowy precincts, full of belated echoes from the by no means impeccable Wren, quite to myself; but I perceived, presently, that another person was sharing my retirement: a somewhat tall, loose-jointed young man who was tiptoeing down the aisle with an effect of elaborate reverence. He carried an indifferently bound gray book, back into which a large map had been awkwardly refolded, and I saw that he was not a devotee,

but a tourist. I suppose that I myself at one time may have tiptoed up the nave of Canterbury or on toward the tribune of San Paolo Fuori to much the same effect.

"Dear me!" said I to myself, in smiling recollection of earlier days, "this youth is making the most of it, surely!"

I thought of all those old things at Ravenna which were soon—thanks to my sudden surrender to the caprice of travel—to be mine, and added:

"What reckless improvidence, however! He is bestowing his whole purse where a single sixpence would more than suffice!"

The young man bore down upon me with wide-open, ingenuous eyes and an evident fulness of feeling that demanded speech for relief. I felt him as stalking forward across the wide, horizonless plain of utter social destitution, and ploughing a pure ether that had never been defiled; and when he threw himself, with a certain frank confidence, upon the only other person present, I was in no degree surprised. Neither was I surprised when he solemnly referred to the mediocre fabric about us as an "ancient edifice" and naïvely expressed his pleasure in the privilege of standing beneath a roof that had endured for a hundred and fifty years.

"A century and a half! think of it! And those

cherub-headed tombstones outside, with dates running back to—back to——"

"Venerable, indeed," I murmured kindly.

"I have just been sitting in Governor Clinton's pew," he went on in a tone of appreciative awe. "How it brings back the old Revolutionary days! I could almost fancy the governor himself sitting there beside me, in his blue-and-buff uniform, and his sword, and his wig. All this makes a wig very real to me, let me tell you."

"Yes, this old place is wonderfully loaded down with history," I contributed indulgently.

He raised his eyes to the eighteenth-century inanities of cornice and pediment that surrounded us, and half lifted his hand with a curious sort of impassioned restraint.

"I expect to see few things more impressive than this," he said slowly.

"You are travelling?" I asked.

"I am beginning to—yes, sir," he responded. "I sail for Europe to-morrow."

II

I HAD not been many hours aboard the *Macedonia* before the general situation and its enveloping atmosphere became tolerably clear; our good ship, I

discovered, had been pressed into the service of Culture. Along with two or three of her sisters, she was coöperating in a scheme of travel-study—an elaborate arrangement that elastically offered a wide choice of dates and a wider choice of routes, together with much counsel, guidance, and positive instruction from many competent minds. The tone of our company was strongly educational; a full half of the *Macedonians*, I presently perceived, were crying for succor—in so far as instruction can work salvation. Study and discussion went on all about me, and such as would listen were addressed in the saloon, the very first evening out, upon "The Art Impulse in Human Society."

Trench had not told me what boat he was expecting to cross on, but I felt that such a *milieu* called loudly for his presence; I was not utterly dumfounded, therefore, when my first stroll on deck developed him. He had already found worthy objects for the exercise of his frank and facile good-will: a pair of ladies who, under his brooding care, were trying to settle down in their deck-chairs. The younger, a pretty but serious-looking girl of twenty, might surrender herself readily enough, I thought, to the dominant interests of the cruise; she would offer her budding nature, in all openness and sympathy, to the plastic touch of culture. Her companion, an

ample woman of forty-five, with an air of half-suppressed jollity, left me, for the moment, in doubt. I could not decide whether she was a fit subject for "improvement," or whether she considered herself to have accomplished the swing of the grand circle and to have got around to the point where simplicity ruled once more, and where culture, as a moving force, was genially ignored. The latter turned out to be more nearly the case. Trench claimed me at once as an old acquaintance, and as soon as he had ascertained that society knew me by the name of Aurelius Gilmore he presented me—all with a self-confident *sang-froid* that stripped the social temple of its last shred of upholstery and left human intercourse to be carried on in something but little better than a stark vacuum.

"Why didn't you tell me yesterday you were coming along?" he asked brightly.

"Dear me! I am always 'coming along,'" I responded. "It's so easy when a man lives close to one end of the ferry."

My presentation of the voyage to Europe as a thoughtless impromptu seemed to dash him. He, evidently, took it as a sacramental matter, and there was a moment of awkward silence—or would have been, if the elder lady had not found in the reference to "yesterday" an opening for the moment's needs.

"Yes, we met in an ancient fane," I said to satisfy her, and related some of the details of the encounter.

"Ancient fiddlesticks!" she pronounced gayly. Nobody took offence, and within five minutes it was as if all four of us had met in the church and had maintained the most intimate relationship ever since.

To this little company Trench was presently spinning his Odyssey: a recital inconceivably short and simple; bare, too, save for the draperies that his eager hands seemed to be snatching from the immediate future. His earliest consciousness of maturity, it transpired, had come to him at a small town in western Nebraska—he left us to make the place as remote, as forlorn, as empty of social opportunity as we liked, and we did not scant the occasion. I myself, indeed, made it all so piteous as to provoke an indignant correction.

"It may have been pretty bad," he declared bluntly, "but it wasn't as bad as that."

I begged pardon suitably and the recital moved on.

Remote and empty his Stapleville may have been, but not remote and empty enough. His next stage came with the rush to Oklahoma. He himself was well to the fore in that wild dash.

"Aha!" cried Mrs. Madeline K. Pritchard heartily.

"I wish I had been in it myself! But about that time I must have been poking along toward the Second Cataract."

"Why, aunt!" said the girl in a shocked undertone; "can you speak in that way of Egypt?"

"I guess I can," retorted the elder lady breezily. "Next time I start traipsing off it will be westward. Oklahoma is *modern*."

Trench looked open-eyed thanks, and the young girl drew into herself a little.

"Bessie, here, has a great reverence for them old ancient monarchies——" began Mrs. Pritchard.

The girl winced. "O aunt, please don't talk so before strangers, and please don't——"

"Oh, it's my grammar, is it? Well, I've noticed that the best people in Venice and Naples talk in their local dialect when they choose, so why shouldn't I, too? I've been tired of grammar for years, and——"

"And please don't call me 'Bessie,'" the girl went on in a lower tone.

"Very well, Miss Elizabeth Payne, I won't, then" —with a grimace. "Another innocent just beginning the *Vita Nuova*—and taking it hard," she murmured for me alone over her shoulder.

"What *is* your dialect?" I asked politely.

"All in due course, dear sir; gentlemen first, how-

ever. We have heard about Mr. Trench's travels; but what, Mr. Gilmore, of yours?"

"They're not greatly varied. Sometimes I go from New York to Naples and back, and sometimes I go from New York to Southampton and back."

"That," said Mrs. Pritchard decidedly, "tells me nothing I didn't know already. You may need a little Oklahoma, too."

"Next year, perhaps. And now——"

"Oh, me? I'm from Ohio," announced Madeline K. Pritchard proudly. "I live near Cleveland. We own the earth."

"Your family is fortunate," I observed.

"My 'family'? That does very well, if you mean the whole Ohio crowd. As I say, we own the earth, New York included. Do you expect us to be modest? Must we duck? Must we shrink?"

I saw, now, the lady's "sanctions"— the sources of her more than metropolitan assurance. She sat near the centre and ruled over East and West alike; from her seat of boundless confidence she might claim—or affect—whatever she chose.

"We groan under your tyranny," I submitted.

"And Bes——and Elizabeth, here, is another of your tyrants. She lives near Cleveland, too. Some notable things are produced in the Western Reserve."

"I believe you," I said gallantly. "And to some of your tyrants we are only too ready to bow."

The young lady seemed to be withdrawing herself from any comment, however oblique. But she gave a sidelong glance at Trench—the freemasonry of youth in the presence of elders—and if her look meant anything at all, she may have intended to ask:

"How can middle-aged people be so silly?"

I hope it didn't mean anything; but the young are often so exacting with us.

It meant little, apparently, to Trench. Though he drew back an attention that had strayed over the fussy uneventfulness of the sea, I guessed that what concerned him most was to regain the ear of the house and that his Odyssey was not quite complete.

I was right. The rush of the land-seekers, Ohio once left behind, had been closely followed by the rush of a great philanthropist, and the new library was ready almost as soon as the new court-house. The books were not many, but they opened up novel vistas to the youthful Westerner (as Trench let Mrs. Pritchard call him); and after two or three years of "empire-building" he had left the broad abundance of his acres to the care of a younger brother and had started eastward to see the great world.

"Good!" cried Madeline Pritchard. "Now we are all accounted for," she added, as she intercepted the deck-steward, with his tray of sandwiches.

III

On reaching shore, the little party thus happily formed did not break up at once. This means, principally, that I escorted the two ladies through the Genoese palaces. Though nothing can raise Genoa to the first rank, I did not mind giving a day to the Via Nuova; Genoa gave me the earliest of my Italian experiences, back in my impressionable twenties, and I shall always think of her with a decent fondness. So we saw a good many grandiose court-yards and staircases and lingered before a good many portraits of the old Genoese nobility. But in our progress from palace to palace Mrs. Pritchard showed a great readiness to let her attention stray to street types and to other matters of contemporaneous interest; and in a quiet angle of a certain magnificent *salone* her niece took occasion to make an extended *apologia.*

"Aunt Madeline doesn't care for the guide-book sights. She just puts up with them on my account. She has been everywhere and seen everything. She has gone around the world—twice."

Elizabeth Payne made a large solemn circle with

one hand. Then she made another in the reverse direction.

"You mean she has worked it both ways?"

"Yes. Once she sailed from Boston, and once from San Francisco. She has seen ever so many historical things. She says she is tired of the past and wants to keep in the present. She thinks, though, that I ought to know Rubens and Van Dyck"—with a motion, here, to certain dark canvases high on the wall behind us. "But I tell her I must get to Florence to see that dear Fra Angelico. I told her a year ago that I couldn't live another month without seeing Fra Angelico. But she has heard of an exposition at Milan and must see the latest things in French autos. I tell her that Milan itself is an exposition. So is Verona. So is Vicenza, even."

I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Pritchard in the next saloon; she was busy, at a wide, open window, with the life of the street.

"I see she doesn't care for picture galleries."

"Sometimes she does, if the pictures are modern —and bad. She says she is tired of good art, and she has promised me some exquisite atrocities—as she puts it—in Rome. She has just heard of a new exhibition there, and is saving herself for it. I'm afraid you don't understand," the girl concluded anxiously.

"Oh, yes, tolerably," I assured her.

"But let me explain. She is 'reverting'—that's what she calls it. She used to have some beautiful pictures of her own, but she sent them away to a gallery, and in their place she has put some oleographs of Swiss mountain scenery. She likes them, she says, because they're 'nature,' and so 'nice and oily.'"

"Ah!" said I.

"And her furniture!" the girl went on. "Of course she threw out all her House Beautiful things long ago; but lately some very good Sheraton reproductions have followed them—to make room for the hair-cloth and carved walnut of the early '50s. Her rugs are terrible. All her Navajos are aniline dyed."

"Oh!" said I.

"She has heard all the finest orchestras in Europe and America, and really knows a good deal about the best music. But she prefers to run after hand-organs. And last month she bought a gramophone."

"Revolt, indeed!" I muttered.

"When I was little she would bring me the loveliest perfumes from Paris. But now, at home, she often has a boiled dinner, and she lets the kitchen-door stand open while it's cooking. She has filled her window-boxes with marigolds. And you have heard the kind of English she uses when she wants to!"

"More of us will get that way," I mumbled darkly. "Too much art; too much civilization."

"And she has a cultivated taste in fiction, yet nowadays she reads——"

"No more, I beg!" said I quickly. "I have written one or two small things myself."

"And this is my first trip abroad," the poor child breathed brokenly. "And there was nobody else to bring me."

She was throwing herself on my chivalry. I resolved that she should see the Old World to advantage, and to the fullest satisfaction, if I could help her; and I told her so. "And as for Fra Angelico," I ended, "I will take you to San Marco and the Uffizi myself."

I spoke as if claiming a monopoly. I was set right almost at once. A somewhat tall, loose-jointed figure appeared in the doorway—Trench, overjoyed to see us after a separation of twenty-four hours. Mrs. Pritchard, as soon as she perceived him, left the window whence she had been watching three or four street-boys nagging her cabman, and came in to get the cream of Trench's first impressions of things Italian.

He had aged perceptibly in the meanwhile—more than a century.

"I have just come from a church that was built

as far back as 1620!" he declared in a pulsation of pure, enraptured energy. Then, to me more directly:

"What you must have thought of me in that church back in New York! And what do you suppose I did that same day, after leaving you? Went to a museum and wasted a whole hour over Copley and Gilbert Stuart—mere things of yesterday! But the moment I heard about all these Van Dycks!"—and he waved toward one of those masterpieces, darkling in its massive frame. "Aren't they magnificent!" he cried.

"Certainly you are more in the movement now," said Mrs. Pritchard indulgently.

"Do you know Alessi?" he asked us generally.

Nobody did. "Why, Alessi built half the palaces in this street—perhaps this very one, too—away back in fifteen sixty something. I hear they used to call it the Via Nuova—no wonder they changed the name! Not know Alessi? Why——"

"I seldom follow out the fag-ends of movements," I said languidly; "though I once did meditate a monograph on Bernini. Still, why look too long? Must we watch the rose until it falls to pieces? Wait for Brunelleschi and Alberti at Florence."

I saw that I had disconcerted him, as had happened before; so I went on:

"This is a good idea of yours—taking Europe as

they sometimes take history in schools: beginning at the end and working backward. However, save your strength, and remember that you have but just about so much film to expose. If you go on like this when you're in only up to your ankles, how will you do when you find yourself in up to your chin? Wait for Rome."

"Yes, let us wait for Rome," said Elizabeth Payne with a touch of solemnity, and I felt that she was accepting me as an ally against her world-surfeited aunt.

IV

Some weeks passed by. Mrs. Pritchard had gone to Milan; I assumed her purchase of a car and was hoping that before long she would deign to recall my claims to proficiency in motor-driving, gained with good friends in stony and sinuous Connecticut. Trench, when next I encountered him, had not yet indeed made Rome, but had got as far on his way as Florence. We came together one forenoon on the Lungarno, at the head of the Carraja bridge. I soon learned that he had added another century or so to his years.

"How glorious!" he exclaimed, waving that active right hand of his at the yellow river and at the opposing rows of blandly stuccoed house-fronts. "Here I

am, at the very heart of the Renaissance! I'm doing Brunelleschi, as you advised; and I've seen the Raphael portraits in the Pitti, and—— Oh, forget, if you can, how ridiculous I was at Genoa! I was merely eating at the second table and didn't know it. I was groping about in a muggy twilight and thinking it was a dazzling high noon. I was tossing off there on the remote horizon when I might have been striking out for the very lighthouse itself." He patted emphatically a large maroon volume that he was carrying under his arm.

How the young fellow was coming on, to be sure —growing, towering, expanding! . . .

I glanced at the maroon volume. "Is that your lighthouse?"

"You've guessed it!" he cried. "Look here! It's the life of Isabella d'Este. Do you know her?"

"Oh, yes," I answered. "Isabella and I are friends of old."

"Well, wasn't she a winner!" he joyed. "The very hub of the wheel! Just look here," he continued, wrenching open his book; "this is a picture of her. How she throws into the shade those commonplace creatures Van Dyck did at Genoa! Recognize her?"

"Indeed I do. A very speaking likeness."

"And didn't she *run* things!" Trench continued, pounding the page with a sinewy fist. "Gathering

the best poets and painters round her. Collecting all sorts of curios and knick-knacks. Corresponding with all the clever people. Setting the fashions for Europe—why, all the queens and princesses from Portugal to Poland used to send to Mantua to learn what to wear and how to behave. She was the first queen of modern society—the regular Mrs. Ah—u'm of her day!"

"Yes," I assented; "Mrs. Ah—h and Mrs. U'm—m rolled into one."

"I'm going to Mantua next week," declared Trench; "and to Ferrara as well. I think I can break away from our party long enough for that. Just think of visiting those palace-halls where——"

"I'm afraid you may find them rather bare to-day —Ferrara, anyhow," I suggested. But I remembered his success with Governor Clinton's pew and said no more, except to add: "On the whole, Isabella compares very favorably with Mrs. Pritchard."

"Oh, yes—those steamer ladies. Are they here?"

"They are. Mrs. Pritchard, I am told, goes to the Gambrinus Halle every evening she can find anybody to take her—it strikes the modern note, she says; and her niece is hot on the trail of Fra Angelico."

Ah, many the dear ladies—some young, some older—some expectant, some disappointed—who

have been consoled in Florence by the early Tuscan masters!

"I thought Miss Payne a very nice girl—what I saw of her," pronounced Trench.

"My own opinion," said I. In fact, I could easily have made out a long list of young women who would have been welcomed with more difficulty by my mother and sisters than this young woman from the Western Reserve.

"Earnest, studious, and all that," Trench proceeded. "Rather pretty, too. Fra Angelico was a painter, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Earlier than Raphael?"

"A century or so."

He strummed thoughtfully upon the parapet and stared in some abstraction at the opposite quay. "Perhaps I ought to look into him."

"Never mind," I rejoined; "*I'm* looking after Fra Angelico. You can easily go farther back than that—he's almost modern. Try Giotto; he's older, and really more important."

"Thank you," replied Trench soberly.

Just then a shining new motor-car came whirring along. In front, with the chauffeur, sat Elizabeth Payne; in the tonneau was Mrs. Pritchard, with one of the travel-study professors beside her. Madeline

K. Pritchard had not been to the Milan Exposition for nothing.

The *Macedonians* immediately foregathered, and when Mrs. Pritchard's reverberant reception of Trench back into the fold was accomplished, I heard the voice of Elizabeth Payne saying, in a kind of strained ecstasy:

"We've seen it at last!"

"Eh?" said I.

"We've seen it—Angelico's 'Coronation.'"

"I should think we had!" exclaimed her aunt. "Four times to the Uffizi, and every time that blessed picture in possession of the copyists. But to-day *our* time finally came, just as we had about given up all hope of ever——"

"At last!" repeated Elizabeth Payne, rapt.

"But, dear me——" I began in dismay. "Well, anyhow, you can't say but that *I* did everything in my power to——"

"I know," said the girl. "You have been kindness itself, dear Mr. Gilmore, and you deserved to be with us to-day."

Trench was staring in complete self-forgetfulness at the strange exaltation of our devotee. Mrs. Pritchard cast a quizzical glance over both of them and said:

"Yes, that great matter is out of the way, and the next thing will be something else. We should be glad

to take both of you gentlemen with us, if we could possibly find room."

"Where are you going?" asked Trench informally.

"To Pisa."

"For the Campo Santo and all?" I inquired.

"Well, we may do the Campo Santo and all," admitted Mrs. Pritchard, "but what we are after is the King's Zoo, at San Rossore. I want Professor Robbins to see the dromedaries."

A shiver passed over Elizabeth Payne. Dromedaries in Italy; she felt the incongruity, as well she might.

"Perhaps we shall 'take' them—show your camera, Bessie," persisted her aunt. "We are prepared to deal with anything that presents itself. If we meet Fra Angelico on the way we shall snap-shot him. Well, good-by. *Avanti*, Serafino!"

The girl made a motion as if to tuck her camera still farther out of sight. Mr. Robbins, an elderly man with a close-cropped gray beard, held up an admonitory finger to Trench as the machine gave forth its first chug and tremor.

"Don't forget the lecture in the hotel parlor this evening," he said; "'Florentine Society in Dante's Day,' you know."

Mrs. Pritchard openly snickered, and off the car sped toward Bocca d'Arno.

"There you have it," I said to Trench, as the little

party disappeared from view; "Giotto, Dante—they go together, as a matter of course. If you are going to be mediæval, do it thoroughly. Don't stop half-way up the stream, but strike straight for the fountain-head itself."

Trench was already dropping into a brown study; it was almost as if the look in Elizabeth Payne's face had been left behind on his own. His arm gave the big maroon book an impatient hunch, and I trembled for the future of my old friend, Isabella d'Este.

V

At Rome Mrs. Pritchard definitely cast her travel-study friends adrift. She had never belonged to their company, of course, but she had joined it or dropped it here and there, as her somewhat cynical necessity for diversion had waxed or waned. "However, I can't follow them through such an epitome of the world as Rome," she had declared, upon encountering the familiar sights and sounds of the Piazza di Spagna; and she added that she had heroically resolved to forego Professor Tait's very best lecture, his "Rome in the Time of Augustus."

Just before leaving Florence I had run across Trench in one of the leafy alleys of the Cascine. Isabella d'Este had fared as I feared.

"She was a mere society woman," he declared, as he plucked at a hedge of box; "a modern, like the rest of us. I don't think I can give much more time to anything as recent as the Renaissance. I shall leave out Ferrara and Mantua, and go, instead, to Assisi —I've got to know about St. Francis. Compare Isabella d'Este with Dante's Beatrice! I consider Beatrice the central woman of the world, and I must understand the conditions that produced her. Miss Payne agrees with me."

"The deuce she does!" I thought to myself. I saw the young pair wandering away together into the bewildering fogs of mediæval mysticism, and thought it but right to bring the situation to the notice of that positive spirit, Madeline K. Pritchard.

Immediately after my arrival in Rome I called upon her at the Bristol. She soon began to understand what I meant. But she took matters with the most disconcerting good-nature.

"It's true enough," she declared, "that Bessie herself is as keen as ever on Fra Angelico. She is inquiring after him here just as she inquired after him at Florence. Why, she asked for him at Milan, when she ought to have been occupied with autos and air-ships; and she will expect to find him at Naples, when she ought to be learning how to make macaroni. But——"

"But——"

"But the young man himself. *He* doesn't care any longer for the mediævals. Haven't you heard? Haven't you met him here?"

"No. What has happened?"

"You knew about his plan for Assisi?"

"Yes."

"He went there. So did the whole travel-class, of course. And while there, he saw a great light, and conversion followed."

"How did it happen?"

"If you remember Professor Tait——"

"The one in your car at Florence?"

"No; that was Professor Robbins. Professor Tait is quite different."

"How?"

"Robbins is only a Middle-Age mooner, but Tait has a real education—one of the regular old classical sort. He dotes on Livy and Horace, and quotes them whenever a suitable occasion offers. That kind."

"He didn't quote them at Assisi?"

"He did—just."

"Apropos of what?"

"Why, apropos of the Temple of Minerva, of course. He caught young Trench and pooh-poohed St. Francis's church to him, and Giotto's pictures, and told him that if he wanted to get the foundations

of a good solid education he must give up the Middle Ages and concentrate on Rome. He brought up Goethe."

"I see. Goethe, I recall, came to Assisi and ignored the monastery and gave all his attention to the temple."

"'What is good enough for the central sun of culture is good enough for me'—thus spake Tait to Trench, according to Trench's own account. Then the old fellow got in his line from Horace or somebody, and Waldo was won."

She called him Waldo—only for the sake of alliteration, I hoped.

"So he has been won over to Rome? But this is all wrong!" I cried.

"How so?"

"I—I had meant him to go to Ravenna. I had rather thought of going there myself, but shall hardly do so now. Ravenna's a quaint, quiet place where he could meditate on the mosaics and the other Byzantine doings to his heart's content. He has made a bolt that is simply shocking. He has treated a thousand years like a mere yesterday. He ought at least to have paused half-way. Ravenna," I concluded ruefully, "would have been just the thing."

"It's too late for Ravenna, now," she answered me. "*Nulla* —— How do they say it?"

"*Vestigia nulla retrorsum?*"

"I guess so. And as for long jumps," she went on, "I believe he is ready, by this time, to jump any chasm whatever."

"There *are* several yet," I acknowledged.

"I should say so," she acquiesced.

"What is he busy with at present?"

"I believe they're doing the palace of the Cæsars, on the Palatine."

"They?"

"Why, yes. Bessie has gone along with him and taken her camera."

"Well! Does she expect to find 'Coronations' and 'Assumptions' there?"

"Don't ask *me*. Many's the long year since I have seen the ruins on the Palatine."

"Do you think that Roman emperors are better for her than mediæval saints? Recall those terrible orgies of Caligula and the rest of them."

"I don't believe they'll make much of the orgies. That complicated camera will need all the attention Bessie has to give. And Trench himself is as correct a young fellow as I ever met."

"U'm!"

"Yes, u'm! He called the other evening and sat an hour in the very chair you're occupying now. He talked in the most straightforward way about his

Western interests, and gave me ever so much information regarding Oklahoma. It seems he has got three different farms down there—or ranches, or plantations, or whatever they call them—and several town lots. He gets his corn to market a full six weeks before they do it in Illinois; and he raises cotton, too —miles of it. What does your land produce, Mr. Gilmore?"

Such impertinence! "I have always lived in an adequate and dignified way," I answered a bit stiffly. "My agent over there cuts my coupons."

I had no great desire to be forced into an open competition. And as for that poor child, with her mediæval obsession, I saw that the impetuous Trench was passing her at a canter.

VI

One morning, ten or twelve days later, Trench burst in upon me in my room at the Londres.

"Why, Gilmore," he cried, "what's this I hear about the Etruscans?"

"I don't know," I rejoined. "What *is* it you hear about the Etruscans?"

"The whole country between Florence and Rome is full of them! Why haven't I come across them? Why have I never seen any of their——?"

"Because they're all dead, perhaps. Because the last of them went the way of all flesh two thousand years ago."

"Don't I know that?" he began hotly.

"There, there," I said. "Sit down and tell me who started you after the Etruscans."

He flopped into a chair. "It's like this. I was walking through the Forum yesterday, looking over the Temple of the Vestals; and when I climbed up to the roadway an old fellow was standing there (a sort of *savant*, if that's the word), who looked at me and—sniffed. He looked down on the ruins themselves, too, with a curious sort of contempt. It made me hot, and I asked him what he meant. He gave it back to me pretty direct, in some sort of foreign accent—it may have been German. He told me I was wasting my time on a lot of mere modernities—said the whole Forum had been straightened out several years ago. He made me feel as if I had been kindergartening. 'What are *you* busy about?' I asked. He replied that he was digging at Vulci—he was after Etruscan tombs. Vulci—know anything about it?"

"I've heard the name; but there are easier places to reach."

"I'm going to reach them," he declared.

"And the Forum, with all Miss Payne's photographs?" I hinted.

"She has found an early mediæval church there, and is doing its frescoes."

Well and good, thought I. The breach was widening once more. I resolved to help Trench retire still farther "up stage"; presently, perhaps, he might be absorbed into the darkness of the ultimate background.

"The Etruscans," I began blithely, "were the first school-masters of the Romans. They whipped those poor, uncouth creatures into shape and passed them on to the Greeks."

"Is it true that Etruria was an aggregation of splendid cities when Rome was just a straw village set in the mud?"

"Of course it is."

Trench drew a long breath. "Well, I vow!"

"Don't try to magnify the early Romans," I proceeded didactically. "They were a barbarous, bumptious lot, bare of every earthly thing except the determination to boss—or, the 'will to power,' as Nietzsche would express it."

Trench sat staring.

"When Macaulay," I went on, "rises to remark:

> "Ho, trumpets, sound a war-note!
> Ho, lictors, clear the way!

don't fancy that those fine things, and all the rest of

them, originated in Rome itself. No; everything that adorned and dignified early Rome was a straight steal from Etruria: temples, sewers, circuses and games, augurs and haruspices; the togas, the trumpets, the curule chairs, the very fasces carried by the early Victorian lictors aforesaid. Next time you come across the fasces printed on an old greenback or sculptured on any of our public buildings, think of Vetulonia, where this most serviceable symbol was devised."

"Vetulonia," murmured Trench. "I'll go there before I'm a week older."

"Don't," I counselled. "Vetulonia to-day is only a heap of brush-grown ruin on a hillock in the most pestilent depths of the Maremma. Try Cære or Tarquinii."

"Very well," replied Trench, bringing out his notebook; "I will. And I'll cut loose from those travel-study people this very day. I've combed over their whole list of talent and there isn't a single Etruscan expert among them. What kind of travel-study is that?"

He reached for his hat.

"Abuse the Romans as much as you like," he added; "I'm passing them up, anyway."

VII

When Mrs. Pritchard announced her perfect willingness to take a spin toward Tarquinii—known to our modern day as Corneto—Bessie Payne, it was easy to see with half an eye, hardly dared believe the evidence of her ears.

"Why, aunt," she stammered—she was far too pleased to be able to keep silence—"you can't care anything about Etruscan tombs!"

"I can't, eh?" responded Madeline K. Pritchard genially. "When you say that, you make the worst guess of your life. I can and do. I expect such a lark as I haven't had for many a day."

"I hope," said the girl seriously, "that we shall be able to respect Mr. Trench's feelings. He is very much wrapped up in Etruria."

"*I* shall," retorted her aunt. "I can't answer for you. I only wish, Mr. Gilmore, that I saw any possible way of taking you with us. But Serafino—I have come to depend so much on him; I feel such a complete trust in him——"

"You're too good," I murmured. "But I am engaged for the day at Tivoli."

Trench presently arrived at the Bristol, and the *portier* helped him into his place. He had already

raced through the Etruscan Museum at the Vatican and was master of a deep fund of by-gone lore. "Bessie's going to get enough of tombstones to last her one good while," declared her aunt. I almost blushed for the expansive creature. It was as if she were already exiling the girl to some far land so new that nobody had yet had a chance to die there.

"You've got the camera, Bessie?" inquired their bustling chaperon, looking back from her post beside Serafino.

"Here it is." Yes, there it was, beyond all doubt, snuggled in between Bessie and Trench.

"You will find little enough to photograph, I imagine," was my contribution at this stage; "and find it very hard to photograph that little."

"Oh, well," observed Bessie, as contentedly as you please, "I shall be able to catch up one or two souvenirs of the day."

Serafino performed some manœuvres round the spouting Triton in the middle of the piazza—I could have done as well—and off they plunged to desecrate the long-kept silences of deepest Etruria.

I was half inclined to follow by train. Still, that would not have been altogether dignified; nor, in fact, had they suggested—as they might have done—my doing so. Besides, there was that utterly superfluous fib about Tivoli. So I left them to their own

courses. "They'll soon get enough of those bleak, bare, bumpy hills down by that miasmatic seashore," I comforted myself.

"How was it?" I asked Mrs. Pritchard, the next afternoon, on the Pincian. The band was playing Mascagni and she was perversely pretending to find their doings adorable.

"Well," she replied grimly, "it was—different. It enlarged my horizon wonderfully. But I am crippled for life, and I doubt if Serafina has a sound joint left in her body."

"Serafina?"

"I mean the car, of course. So long as Serafino is the name of the chauffeur, Serafina will be the name of the chauffée. When Serafino goes—I hope he won't for a long time—Serafina's name will be changed accordingly. If Vittorio succeeds to Serafino, then Vittoria succeeds to Serafina. If Francesco, Francesca. If Giuseppe, Giuseppina. You catch on?"

"Readily."

"I should hate awfully to lose Serafino. How I could have wheedled him away from Florence and kept him so long remains a constant surprise to me. Some days I think he adores me; other days it seems as if I had only hypnotized him. And there are other days still when I feel sure he looks on me as the queerest creature that ever came along the pike,

and is only holding on to see what I shall do next!"

How tedious a clever woman can be! "You are not here alone, I suppose?" I inquired with a glance over the circling carriages and the sauntering throng.

"I? Alone in such a large concourse as this? Hardly. I am being looked after by a pair of young people just behind that shrubbery. Whistle and they'll come out."

They came without my whistling, and as they babbled forth their sepulchral litany it was hard to tell which had become the more thorough-going Etruscan of the two.

"How about the camera?" I asked Miss Payne.

"Why, things turned out pretty nearly as you prophesied. Still, it was a great pleasure even to try to help such an enthusiastic student as Mr. Trench. Enthusiasm is the very savor of travel—don't you think so?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And aunt behaved nobly," the girl went on. "And Serafino was nice, too. In fact, we all agreed that Mr. Trench"—here she lowered her voice for me alone—"was entitled to the very pleasantest day that could be devised. I really got six or eight good exposures; I'll show them to you some time."

"And you are actually interested in Etruscan antiquities?"

"Indeed I am; immensely so," she returned, with the clearest glance and the honestest intonation in the world.

"How long will her interest last?" I inwardly wondered; and our common attention reverted to the brilliant scene about us.

VIII

I SAW nothing of Trench for the next fortnight. I understood vaguely that he had renounced the world for a little and was pursuing his researches farther into Etruria. I fancied him as radiating in endless excursions from Viterbo, or as toiling solitary along the remotest reaches of the Maremma coastline. Meanwhile, it devolved upon me, naturally enough, to provide entertainment for Elizabeth Payne. I recalled two or three Angelicos at the Vatican, and took her, in all haste, to see them. She showed less interest than I expected, and began to hint, lightly yet insistently, about going on to the Etruscan Museum.

"Those dead and gone things!" I exclaimed disparagingly.

"Life can be put into them," was her rejoinder.

We spent two hours among the sombre Etruscans, passing in review their vases and *focolari* and cinerary urns and goldsmith's work and the reproductions of those faded subterranean frescoes at Corneto.

"So *this* is how they looked!" was her comment on the pictured games and dances and banquets. She gazed long and earnestly at the various gaudy creatures that were capering about with more than doubtful propriety—singular decorations for the house of death.

"My preference is for Fra Angelico," I said pointedly. She ignored my rebuke. On the way back to the hotel I took her to the tomb of her painter at Santa Maria sopra Minerva. It left her cold—other tombs were wanted now. I sighed patiently; of course nobody—not even the most docile—can be kept at one stage forever.

A few days later I met Trench in the Corso. The marks of a strenuous fortnight were all over him.

"What luck?" I asked.

"Oh, very fair," he replied. "I have had an interesting experience, and can show you a few things, if you care to come to my rooms."

"Certainly," said I.

He led me sedately through a quarter of a mile of street and introduced me soberly enough into his apartment. His own interest, as he began to display

his acquisitions, was many degrees below the pitch I had anticipated.

He showed me some trivial bronzes and a few vases—or rather, the fragments from which vases were to be reconstructed: ordinary *roba di museo*, but even less good than the average. He languidly detailed the various incidents, more or less picturesque, that had attended their discovery. What was the matter?

"This cup," he said, putting together the red and black fragments of a promising *kylix*, "I had thought of giving to Miss Payne."

"Ah, yes," said I indifferently.

He laid the fragments aside with an indifference hardly less, and stood staring thoughtfully through the window. Presently he spoke.

"Day before yesterday, at my last site, I met an Englishman—the only creature besides *contadini* and *vetturini* I had encountered for a week."

"He was after the Etruscans, too?"

"N—no," replied Trench. "No, he wasn't," he repeated with an abrupt emphasis. "I was examining some mighty fine old walls—or at least foundations—when he came toward me through a thicket of underbrush, hatchet in hand. He poked his foot at those immensely venerable stones, as I thought them, and said disgustedly, 'Why, they're only Etruscan!'

"'What did you expect them to be?' I asked.

"'I'm after the Pelasgians,' he returned in the sourest tone imaginable; 'what is this modern rubbish to *me?*' And he stalked away again through the underbrush. Tell me, Gilmore, who were the Pelasgians, and are they older than the Etruscans?" The fellow's face of strained concern was pitiful.

"Now, see here, Trench," I began, "you've gone on long enough assuming that I know everything. The line must be drawn somewhere, and I draw it right here."

"But *did* the Etruscans drive out the Pelasgians and tear down their buildings and use the foundations for their own?"

"That's supposed to have happened in a few places—at Cortona and Cosa and so on."

"Then the Pelasgians are the older?"

"Yes, indeed. Ages older," I added hardily.

He gave a kind of ecstatic groan. "Then I've got to take them up right away."

I couldn't but admire such gallantry. "All right, if you will. But you've really been on the wrong side of the Tiber for the Pelasgians. The best of their Cyclopean doings are beyond the Alban hills, on the way to Naples. The Pelasgians are harder to understand, but lots easier to get at."

"Praise Heaven for that!" muttered Trench,

glancing down at his worn boots and his lacerated hands.

"Yes, indeed," I encouraged him; "*they* were obliging enough to build near the railroad and the highway. You can get to Alatri or Ferentino with no trouble at all."

"Thank you, Gilmore," he said with feeling. "I'll start off to-morrow—well, no, not to-morrow" —here he worked his shoulder-blades with a grimace of pain—"but before the week is out. Will you go with me?"

"O Trench, Trench, Waldo Trench!" I exclaimed, laughing.

When next I called on Mrs. Pritchard, three days later, Elizabeth Payne asked me how we had happened to overlook the Pelasgian Museum.

"There is no such thing," I returned bluntly. "The Pelasgians don't come to us; we have to go to them."

But I laughed no more.

IX

"Now, see here," said Madeline Pritchard decidedly, "we're not going to let Mr. Trench go off all by himself to any more of those lonesome places."

"He isn't going all by himself," I returned. "He's going with me."

"He's going with *us*," pronounced Mrs. Pritchard in the tone of finality. "And so are you. In the auto."

"I, too? But—Serafino——"

A cloud passed over the good lady's handsome and genial face.

"We are losing him," she said sadly. "Florence is too alluring, or my general oddity has lost its charm, or something equally as bad has happened——"

"'Equally as bad'! O Aunt Madeline!" chided her niece.

"So that if we are to be driven to Ferentino you will have to drive us, Mr. Gilmore."

"Very well," I replied. "At what hour does the Aurelia depart?"

"The Aur——? Oh, I forget; the dear old Serafina is a thing of the past. Be here at nine."

We reached Ferentino by noon, and killed nobody on the way.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Pritchard as we toiled and sputtered up the last incline, "this *is* great! No more Corneto for me; give me the sky and the hilltops every time!"

Meanwhile Trench and Elizabeth Payne were standing up, side by side, to catch a first view of things Cyclopean.

He had brought the patched-up *kylix* and given it to her just before we started out. He had offered it

without enthusiasm and she had received it with only the most conventional signs of interest. Etruria was dead.

We grandly ignored the double arches of the Porta Casamari, for they looked as if they were merely Roman. As for the various marbles and mosaics of the cathedral, we never gave them a thought. We found our complete account in the ponderous polygonal walls of the narrow Porta Sanguinaria. Trench was in a state of exaltation, and Madeline Pritchard cried out loudly over such massiveness and such antiquity.

"And I thought I had seen everything!" she exclaimed. "O Mr. Trench, the deepest gratitude of a world-weary old woman is yours! Now, Bessie, your camera."

"Yes," said I; "the camera. Walls such as these are the only things the Pelasgians have left us. How would they do in a museum, eh?"

Obedient Bessie reached down under the seat for the instrument. It was easy to see that those old walls had kindled in her the most burning interest, and that she was panting to bring her little art into its fullest play. She felt about for a moment; then she straightened up.

"I've—I've forgotten it, aunt!" she murmured remorsefully.

"Bessie Payne!" exclaimed Mrs. Pritchard, in the most massive of Pelasgian accents.

"I've forgotten it!" the poor girl murmured again, and turned her eyes, full of pitiful self-reproach, on —Trench.

Trench, to do him justice, put on no "side." He thanked her heartily for her good intentions and consoled her manfully for their frustration. Having now only our own eyes to depend upon, all four of us stared as hard as we could, and then put ourselves in motion for Alatri, where bigger walls and broader gateways had been awaiting us for some three thousand years.

"Aren't we almost reaching the end?" I asked Mrs. Pritchard, as we whizzed past Anagni on the way home.

"There are only a few more old things left," she returned humorously. "*I* shan't mention any of them. Or," I thought I heard her add under her breath, "shall I, and bring this wild-goose chase to an end?"

X

Our little party presently dissolved once more. I heard that the ladies, having engaged a new chauffeur, had moved on to Naples, and I imagined Trench as having returned to further explorations among the Volscian hills.

Though Rome was thinning, I lingered a few days for the sake of an interesting Tuscan countess, a commensal of Mrs. Pritchard's at the Bristol.

"I have often wondered," this friend observed to me one afternoon, "how your American ladies contrive to do so much travelling without maids."

"That *is* a question, isn't it?"

"But I am on the way to answer it."

"Yes?'

"They borrow maids from us."

Then I heard how her Nencina, a week before, had asked for a day's leave to visit an old aunt who was ill at Frascati; and how diligent inquiry, immediately made, had failed to disclose the existence of any aunt whatsoever.

"Then Nencina wept and confessed that a Miss Payne—your Miss Payne——"

"My Miss Payne!"

"Had asked her company on the train as far as Frascati, to visit the villas. 'Did you go any farther than Frascati?' I was inspired to ask. Yes, the two had gone several miles beyond, to a town my Nencina had never heard of, she said. 'What for?' I demanded. And she wouldn't, or couldn't, tell me. Your Miss Payne, it appears, acted just as all foreign tourists act, and there the account ended. Except that she gave Nencina ten *lire* for her trouble and

told her to keep it perfectly clear in her mind that they had spent the day among the Frascati villas. I have plied the girl in vain——"

"No doubt you have plied her!" I muttered between my teeth.

"But nothing could I learn about the motives of your singular young compatriot. By the way, she left a book behind her—a very heavy one."

"Forgotten, doubtless." Forgetfulness seemed growing upon the poor girl. "What was it called?"

"'The Pelasgic Peoples.' The volume seemed quite new."

"Ah, well," I observed blandly, "we Anglo-Saxons are a race of eccentrics, and Italy seems to bring all our eccentricity out."

And no further satisfaction did my hostess receive, though I was glad enough of the hint she had unwittingly given me.

In due course I followed the general movement southward to Naples. On my first afternoon I sallied forth to enjoy the brilliant *corso* along the waterfront of the Villa Nazionale. A trig and compact motor-car was attempting to accommodate itself to the slower pace of the many carriages that swarmed over the wide road-bed. Just as it came abreast of me a familiar voice gave a word of command.

"Stop, Giuliano!"

And an instant later, Mrs. Pritchard, at whose side sat Elizabeth Payne, was inviting me to mount to the vacant place beside her newest chauffeur.

"Giuliana is trying to hold her own in this gay throng, and we need your help."

"It is a transplanted Rome," I said, "I have seen dozens of familiar faces already."

"We miss one," declared Mrs. Pritchard bluntly. Elizabeth Payne—not merely, I hope, to cover her confusion—leaned forward and greeted me with an elaborate prettiness.

"Everybody who ought to be present will doubtless appear," I said, to reward her.

"O prophet!" exclaimed her aunt, and pointed to a self-absorbed figure strolling along the edge of the drive, not fifty feet from us—Trench, of course, and no other.

Mrs. Pritchard caught up Trench as easily as she had caught up me. Guiliana drew a little aside from the pressing throng of vehicles, and Trench was encouraged to give an account of his recent peregrinations. Mrs. Pritchard asked directly about everything she wanted to know, and Elizabeth Payne's speaking brown eyes seconded her with a most becoming attention.

This time Trench's boots were whole and his hands showed none of the scars of battle. There had

been no repetition of earlier hardships. He was, in fact, quite presentable, and the masterful owner of the machine at once made him a part of the *corso*, just as she had done with me.

"You may go back to the hotel, Giuliano." The new chauffeur, a swarthy, thick-set man, was no second Serafino, no ingratiating, indispensable Tuscan. "Mr. Gilmore, you may have Giuliano's place, and Waldo Trench may take yours."

Trench, from his new post, told us of his recent tour. In due course he had seen Cori and Norba and Segni and the rest of them. He now knew as much about the Cyclopean builders among the Volscian hills (whom, adopting the newest jargon, he called "Italioti") as anybody can know—which is very little, at best.

"You feel repaid?" asked Mrs. Pritchard kindly but keenly.

"Ye-es," began Trench.

"No, you don't," she retorted instantly. "You're keeping something back. Out with it!"

"Well," responded Trench slowly, "I have just been talking with one of the professors at the museum, and he tells me of some prehistoric things off in a remote corner of Sicily, the work of rock-dwellers called Sikelians or Sicanians, things even older than——"

"I've never heard of either of those tribes," declared Mrs. Pritchard loudly and with extraordinary promptness; "and neither, I'm sure, have any of the rest of us. And when it comes to something that Mr. Gilmore and I haven't heard of, it's time to stop."

"But I *have* heard of——" I began.

"Aurelius Gilmore," she interrupted with great energy, "get Serafina—I mean, Giuliana—out of this crowd at once. Drive straight west toward Posilipo. We'll settle this there."

"But I have heard of both the Sikelians and the Sicanians," I insisted, as I wrenched the car out of the press and started for the less frequented suburban road. "The distinction between them is an important one and well worthy the best endeavors of an ambitious young *savant*." I hope I pronounced the word "*savant*" with no sarcastic intonation.

"*Avanti!*" Mrs. Pritchard merely cried, as she had so often done with Serafino.

In three minutes we were climbing the hill of Posilipo, and the Bay, in all its breadth and beauty, was spreading itself before us.

"Look at that!" cried Madeline K. Pritchard, sweeping her arm over the wide prospect and directly addressing Trench. "How much of charm and interest before our very eyes! Why scour the world, why poke among the prehistoric ages? Why grow

old before one's time? Why miss a hundred fine things immediately about us for the sake of some single thing away off in the dim distance? We will trundle you to Pompeii, Mr. Trench"— a dab at the panorama—"or to Sorrento"—another dab—"or even to Pæstum"—with a slower and steadier pointing toward the most dimly blue of all the circumjacent peaks: "Pæstum, for choice, since we have given due attention to everybody save the Greeks. But I cannot promise you our coöperation in Sicily."

And then the ruthless lady invited us to dinner.

"Come to the hotel at seven, both of you. We will arrange some excursion for to-morrow. And Bessie, Mr. Trench, has a little gift to present you."

Elizabeth Payne, with a look of imperilled maiden modesty, placed a protesting hand on her aunt's plump arm. Trench, whose eyes were already wide open, now opened them still wider; and for the first time there was "speculation" in them. A man less innocent or less self-absorbed would have begun to speculate before.

XI

"Now, Bessie," said Mrs. Pritchard, as soon as we had left *table d'hôte* for her own *salottino*. "It's got to be done one time or another," I thought I heard her add in an undertone.

The girl, blushing rather prettily, rose with some hesitancy, or an appropriate affectation of hesitancy, and stepped toward a writing-desk.

"You may give it to him yourself," said the elder lady generously; and Trench was presently holding in his hand a nice enough little photograph album—a souvenir, as Mrs. Pritchard was at hand to put it, of their various journeyings together. "Bessie herself took every one of them," she finished.

Under the circumstances a prompt review of the entire series was little less than obligatory, and we spent the ensuing quarter of an hour in reliving the various excursions, archæological and other, of the past few months.

"That's all," said Elizabeth Payne, when we seemed close to the back cover.

"Not quite," archly declared her aunt, who had kept pace with every picture. "I think there's one more—just one."

"Let's have it," said Trench, with a touch of hoarse brusqueness that may have betokened either extreme embarrassment or a sudden, long-delayed access of feeling.

We turned the leaf, and there it was—the Porta Sanguinaria at Ferentino.

"It isn't as wide as some of those other arches,"

said Mrs. Pritchard distinctly, "but it is wide enough for two to pass through."

If ever Innocence were bold, it was when Madeline K. Pritchard spoke these words.

"Well, that *is* the last," she said, turning away, and I discreetly followed her example.

In the wide embrasure of the open window I suggested to her—discreetly or not, as others may decide—that this last photograph permitted one to surmise a second visit to Ferentino.

"Possibly," she returned, with careless buoyancy. And then: "My dear Mr. Gilmore, I am not blind, I am not ignorant; and twenty francs, well bestowed, will often add considerable to what one may know already."

She turned back into the room, where the album continued to preserve a status that neither of the young pair dared to change, leaving me with the painful picture of a poor serving-maid doubly, trebly corrupted.

"I think we will make it Pæstum," she announced presently; and Pæstum, under her forceful direction, it became.

At two o'clock the next afternoon Mrs. Pritchard and I were seated at the base of the Temple of Neptune. Monte Chianiello and its mates looked composedly down upon us, and the blue sea lay neg-

lected in the distance. Behind the car a superfluous but exigent "guide" was consoling himself with the remains of the luncheon; and Trench and Elizabeth Payne had wandered off, in intimate converse, in the direction of the Basilica.

"Well," said I, luxuriously fitting my back into a fluting of one of those giant columns, "antiquity still rules."

"Antiquities," rejoined my companion, "are all very well if they can be put to a modern use. But when I see Inexperience losing itself in the murky labyrinth of the past——"

"The 'murky labyrinth of the past' is good. May I use it?"

"Certainly. Why, then I feel like lending a hand to lead it back to the light of the present day."

"You will probably prevail," I observed, but not too bitterly.

"That young man!" she went on; "such amazing vigor, such exhaustless driving-power, such astonishing singleness of purpose! And all, at present, so misapplied. Think what such qualities are going to effect for him on those farms and in the civic life of his new commonwealth!"

"You find him single-minded, eh? I should say 'simple-minded,' or 'myriad-minded,' or ——"

"Well, whether single, simple, or myriad, I bank

strong on the thorough-going fellow who can drive straight to the point."

There was a sound behind us. The two young people were approaching through the opposite colonnade, each with an illumined countenance that conveyed one and the same declaration. Trench had come to the point.

"It has happened," murmured Madeline Pritchard devoutly.

"Let's render thanks, if thanks are due," said I.

"Due—and overdue," said she.

Trench advanced with a buoyant gayety that seemed the full assertion of his ultimate self.

"I have decided to give up the Sicilians," he said. "I have found curtain beyond curtain. One can't go on forever. One must stop somewhere."

"You have stopped at a very good place," said Mrs. Pritchard. "Another month would have made a graybeard of you."

"We have resolved to remain modern," said Elizabeth Payne, with a happy reflection of Trench's own manner. "We have returned to the present era and mean to stay there."

Mrs. Pritchard rose and gave each of them a hand. "Welcome back, my dear children, to the twentieth century, after your long jaunt through time and space."

"A happy omen," said I, rising also and repeating her action, "that you should emerge upon the modern age through these portentous pillars of Pæstum."

"A lovely phrase—whatever it means," breathed Mrs. Pritchard. "Don't lose it."

"Congratulate us," said Trench ebulliently, "upon our entry into our new state."

"New?" repeated Mrs. Pritchard. "One of the oldest in the world!"

Trench gave us another of those wide looks. "I mean the State of Oklahoma."

Mrs. Pritchard laughed. "I mean the state of matrimony."

"You have combined them," said I, with an indulgent smile that set the past aside and forgave everything in it. "I trust you will prosper in both."

NEW WINE

NEW WINE

I

"WHY, yes," said Bannister Grayle, in reluctant acquiescence; "it's a good enough bit of scenery. And it's a fine, productive country. But what does it produce for *him?*"

"You ought to know," returned Miss McChesney. "Last evening he gave you of his own fowls and salad, with wine from the very vineyards now before your eyes. This morning you have eaten bread made from wheat ground on his own estate and spread with butter churned by his own peasants. For further information, look about you." The girl's blue eyes swept lightly over the prospect, and her tall, slender figure almost seemed to sway in harmonious accompaniment to her glance.

"I understand all that," returned Grayle, in a tone of discontent. His bony knuckles drubbed nervously on the time-worn parapet of the wide terrace, as his eye ranged negligently over the olive groves below and travelled on past the sturdy farm-hands who were vocalizing from the bean-patch still farther down. "I don't mean just this villa," he continued,

shrugging at a pompous Renaissance front and at the humbler offices that peered from behind its angles; "I mean the whole valley; I mean the entire country-side; I mean, most particularly, that town."

The young man thrust forth his long arm over the balustrade and cast his hand in a comprehensive sweep across the wide prospect that lay at their feet. Distantly, fold after fold, the mountains of mid-Italy swam before them; not quite with the melting suavity of Tuscany, not quite with the meditative mysticism of Umbria, not quite with the half-sleeping yet sinister savagery of the elder Etruria, yet in a subtle and concordant blend that took its tone from all three. Through the olive-muffled plain ran a meandering river—a stream scant of water, yet big and turbid with history; and in the distance gleamed an islanded lake—a lake small in circumference, yet memorable for one of the greatest slaughters in human annals. On both sides of the spacious valley high-set towns and villages took their share in the general reign of light; and almost at the foot of Villa Montefalcone itself—not, assuredly, more than a mile away—a city, full-panoplied in swelling domes and soaring campanili, spread out into the plain.

Grayle's hand paused and his forefinger pointed steadily at the banded shaft and serrated parapets

of the chief of the towers. "I mean, most particularly, that town," he repeated.

Sibyl McChesney's eye followed. There lay the city, homogeneously reared in stuccoed stone, decorously sheltered by wide stretches of red tiling, and graciously composed through the delicate adjustment of private domicile and public monument; the whole encircled by the generous greenery of orchard, grove, and garden, and capaciously canopied by a, serene, unsullied sky.

"Why *should* the town 'produce' anything for him?" she asked. "His lands run down only to that second wall—he told me so last evening."

"Why *shouldn't* it?" demanded Grayle stubbornly.

"It isn't his, I tell you," repeated the girl, maintaining her ground.

"It was once, wasn't it?"

"How do you mean?"

"His ancestors ruled it, didn't they?"

"Perhaps so. But that was a long time ago."

"'Perhaps' so? Certainly so. It's a simple matter of history."

Bannister Grayle rubbed his dry cheeks and worked the end of his sharp, straight nose. "All this represents an opportunity," he said, as if reluctant to leave the idea of the seventeen or eighteen thousand

unconscious people massed there in the valley below them. "And if you ask my opinion, it's this: Ruggiero, for a man whose blood is one-half American, has not shown himself very enterprising. If he's going to make himself felt, it's time he began—he's close on twenty-three."

"'Began,' cousin Bannister?" cried Sibyl McChesney. "He *has* begun! His tragedy was much appreciated in Florence, and even professional musicians in Rome praise his quartettes; and his collection of Etruscan antiquities and of early Umbrian paintings is one of the most——"

"I know, I know," mumbled Grayle. "But don't imagine that the early Stellini got their grip on things by writing plays and composing music, or kept it there by bringing together little collections of vases and pictures. Any ordinary Italian can write verses and find music for them—in fact, far too many of them do; but Ruggiero is not an ordinary Italian. He's not an Italian at all—he's a great deal more."

"Still, his mother—— Why, she hasn't been back home to Albany for thirty years."

"Never mind that. Her blood is in him, and I see it working. Oh, if I only had him in New York! The Stellini would find there was a live wire among them once more—the first, I expect, for four hundred years. Only think what the Founder himself would

do there! When Ubaldino degli Stellini—the great Ubaldino—wanted things, he just organized his forces and sallied out and got them. He didn't loiter along in the rear and content himself with picking up the leavings. I'm disappointed in Ruggiero, and I don't mind saying so. He has lingered on this side of the water a few years too long."

"I suppose he will continue to linger," said Miss McChesney meditatively. For a moment or two her eyes dwelt abstractedly upon the wavering outlines of the distant mountains. Now that the first touch of criticism had attacked the glamour shed by young Ruggiero degli Stellini—and oh, how abundantly he could shed it!—Sibyl began to contrast him with other young lions who had roared for her at home. These, she must acknowledge, could offer something different from anything that was, apparently, within the present compass of Ruggiero; and, to tell the truth, not only something different, but something more. She recalled certain tongues that could rage above all the other voices of the pack, certain nimble fingers that could pluck plentiful dollars from a bare floor. Once or twice such fingers had closed on her own and such tongues had asked the question of questions. But the dollars that Sibyl needed were many, many; and her idea of her own merits and deservings rose to the heavens; and up to the present

time she had never committed herself by too definite a reply.

She came back to earth and to her companion. "What is it you want him to do?"

"Do? I want him to assert himself. I want him to make his good American blood tell. I want him to be able to furbish up that shabby old pueblo of his in Florence, and even to put a few props under that other venerable ruin down there in the town itself. I want him to have always a little spare money in his pocket. I want him to shine at court. I want him to travel in his own motor car. I want him to be conspicuous in 'lo sport.' In brief, he's a good fellow, and I wish him well. Don't you, too? And would you yourself seriously object to any of the things I have just proposed?"

Sibyl McChesney dropped her eyes and blushed.

"There's one more thing I want," continued Grayle, throwing out his long arm again. "I want him to tax that town. I want him to levy tribute."

"Tribute?"

"Tribute. They're only sheep, down there. I've walked through their streets; I've seen them at their daily doings. He can work it."

"My dear Cousin Bannister, the Italians are not always so docile as you and Uncle Bartholomew have found us poor Americans."

"These would be. When I walked those streets, I didn't walk them alone. Ruggiero was with me. Oh, how they deferred! It was inconceivable! When they caught sight of the band on that straw hat, with the blue and white of the Stellini, they went prostrate. He took possession of the principal hotel merely by pausing in the doorway—and it would have been the same with the Municipio itself. A sudden hush fell upon every café; even the racket of the market-place was reduced by half. All the way down and all the way up again he got bows, bobs and courtesies on every side. Not a soul of them forgot that the great Ubaldino has his mention in the Inferno, and that Ruggiero, present and visible in the flesh, is his great-great-great-great——"

"Stop where you are," commanded Sibyl McChesney. "But it *does* open a tremendous vista, doesn't it?" she was unable to avoid adding.

"That town is his meat," declared Grayle succinctly.

"O, Bannister," said the girl reproachfully; "you are so—so modern!"

II

Bannister Grayle was only thirty-one, but already he was a national figure. More, he was an international figure; and he had gained that proud

position even before leaving the New World to visit the Old. A young gentleman of gallant spirit—thus it had come to him, and come early—should assert himself, should impress himself, should dominate the rank and file. A masterful and ambitious man was not to be expected to make a living, still less to "earn" it; he ought to take it. The directest road to this end seemed to lie in gaining control of the food supply of the populace. Seize it—such was his inspired thought; and then make the unwary and inefficient pay your price. Bannister, selecting a suitable centre for suitable operations, had dashingly essayed this task. Though his noble attempt was not fully crowned by success, yet it made him known; and notoriety, after all, *is* success—or at least a prelude to it. The enterprise cost the Grayles a million dollars and the objurgations of lower-class Europe. The money was resignedly charged up to experience, and the objurgations were ignored. "Practice; practice," murmured old Bartholomew Grayle, drawing his last check; "only wait—my boy will fetch it yet."

Soon afterward the younger Grayle, amidst a mingled chorus of execration and of admiration, sailed away to the older world whose spoliation had been a part of his great plan; and he was now supposed to be gathering his forces for a coup of even vaster pro-

portions than his first. True, he had failed to land his whale; yet this did not prevent him from angling, in the interval, for minnows, or even from baiting the hook on another's line. "I can't expect Stellini to begin by tackling Rome or Florence," he said; "but we might see what he can do in his home town."

It was in Florence itself, during the early months of the summer tourist season, that Grayle and his party had first met Ruggiero degli Stellini, the new marquis of Montefalcone. Palazzo Montefalcone, not long since the scene of the obsequies of the late Marchese Alessandro, the celebrated councillor of state, presently fell languishing beneath the August sun; and a casual acquaintance begun by Arno was destined to continue, on warmer terms, through the course of the autumn *villeggiatura* among the southern hills. "We shall be ever so glad to have you for a week in September," had said young Ruggiero, new lord and master of Montefalcone; and his mother, the widowed Marchesa, had added her invitation to his. She was to spend the earlier days of her bereavement in suitable retirement—which the season of the year made easy and convenient; but she had no wish that retirement should become solitude. She was gregarious, as eminently became an American.

It was as Octavia Chalmers that she had come to Rome with her father, the ambassador. She never forgot that he had enjoyed intimate parleyings with kings, or that an uncle of hers had been vice-president. By no means—this aside from her dowry—had she come empty-handed into the Florentine patriciate; and Ruggiero, conscious enough of the name and position that were his in the land of his mother's adoption, was never left quite unconscious of the claims he might make, should he choose, in the land of her birth.

"Fortunate man!" breathed Sibyl McChesney, who was not without susceptibility to the advantages of "race," and with whom social position was a constant concern; "everything is completely right on both sides." And Grayle, who had risen from an undistinguished level, was driven to a grudging acknowledgment of what official rank might do for one—even far from one's native seat. No credentials from the Western world told with equal force—save the possession of land. Grayle, who had more than once seen mere money fall short, happily possessed some five thousand acres in remotest West Virginia—a tract carrying the actuality of timber and the potentiality of coal; and he would bring in this shaggy landscape whenever he felt that his reception tended to sag below his general merits. But "title,"

that intangible and ofttimes preposterous thing, was, after all, the great piece on the board; and as an evidence of high place, long held, it told with double force. Mere intellect, alas, must yield the *pas!* "Not but that our friend has brains, too," Bannister conceded. "I believe he has; I'm sure he has. The thing is, to bring them into play. Every blooded colt, I suppose, must accept the particular harness and track that his own country naturally provides."

"A great performance really demands a great stage," contributed Sibyl McChesney. "How can one perform greatly without a great fortune? And evidence that our friends possess such is not too apparent. You must have noticed that the palace in Florence is still furnished in the style of 1820; while the bedrooms, here——" She delicately refrained.

Most of the masculine acquaintances of this young girl—she was little past twenty—had been youthful soldiers of fortune, knights of the road; that they had succeeded to some degree in their gallantly predatory schemes was sufficiently shown from the fact of their having come within the ken of her own social circle. "Success," with her and her mother, was a simple *sine quâ non;* nor was the general mechanism of "success" totally unfamiliar to her. "Almost any clever young man," Sibyl declared to herself, "ought to roll up a few hundred thousand

dollars within a few years;" and she felt that without those few hundred thousand—the mere guarantee, all this, of greater success to come—even title and social prestige would stand but as a row of ciphers to which no significant numeral has been prefixed. "He is the dearest fellow in the world," said Miss Sibyl obscurely. "But he must use his powers —I'm sure he's got them—in a modern way for modern ends. Can I inspire him to the effort?" Recollections of some of those other young men passed through her mind; but not one among them had possessed or ever could possess blood and title, not one of them had ever possessed or could possess —here she glanced over the groves and vineyards of the Stellini—an ancestral seat. "And really, when you come to it, he is one of us, after all."

III

"Ruggiero, let me have Mrs. McChesney's cup," said the Marchesa. "Two lumps, I believe you have?" The good lady was conducting, in the heart of rural Italy, the essentially Anglo-Saxon function of the five o'clock tea. The red-tiled terrace lay in the shade of the pillared and balustraded house front, and the lightest breeze stirred the stunted oleanders that stood about in their green boxes.

Ruggiero, half Mercury, half Ganymede, rose to the service of his mother's guest. He was a slender, lithe young fellow who had early escaped all possibility of that stockiness which, among the Italians, so often wrecks the intention of elegance. A dense black crop of hair, which formed a line of uncompromising definiteness round forehead and temples, told of the immense vitality and persistence of the elder race; and the presence of the newer strain shone from his eyes, which, though large and dark, after the best Italic wont, still held possibilities of clearness, sharpness, and penetration that environment and circumstance had not yet called forth. And in his carriage—it all became plain enough merely as he rose, reached, took a step or two, and so back to place—was evidence of a free, unconscious grace and full promise that the bulk of mere flesh might never hope for domination.

"Good form, good action—a promising young three year old," thought Bannister Grayle patronizingly, as he lolled back in his wicker chair. Grayle never exerted himself on minor social occasions, when willingness, in the person of another and younger man, happened to be at hand. "But he needs training, and an introduction to the possibilities of the track: I doubt if the conception of a purse has ever entered his mind. Surely he is capable of some-

thing far better than patronizing art and passing tea."

And truly there was that about Ruggiero degli Stellini which suggested the young race-horse that had never left the paddock. Mettle, spirit, wind, and speed—all these seemed to be awaiting some suitable occasion for functioning. Sibyl McChesney, also, was conscious of this presence of latent force and this free and rapid grace. She, too, allowed herself a second cup of tea without urging—solely that she might continue her enjoyment of a completed social aptitude such as made the well-meant assiduities of her young lions of the West no better than rough approximations.

After a second cup of tea had insured for a certain length of time the well-being of Caroline McChesney's large and carefully considered body, an effort was made to do something for her mind. A civilized interest in antiquities, in the fine, slow sediment of human life and experience, was assumed, and the footman was sent to bring the results of his young master's latest excavations.

"In the sala, Andrea—the second cabinet on the left. Never mind, though; I will get them myself."

Ruggiero rose with the precipitate eagerness of a catapult and threw himself across the wide terrace. A similar flight brought him back to the tea-table.

"There!" he said, putting down a few coins with ringing emphasis. "All found within the last fortnight, and my own hands wielded the spade! No mere matter of luck, either; one must know where to dig. Note this coin in particular, from the Lombard duchy of Spoleto. Here we have the head of old Duke Guido himself—about the year 900 of our era. Judge whether such specimens are numerous!"

The Marchesa smiled indulgently, and her guests bent over the head of the old Lombard with polite murmurs. Sibyl McChesney alone was definitely articulate; she alone was able to imagine sympathetically the gallant endeavors that had brought this precious bit of the far-distant past to light. Bannister Grayle shrugged slightly. Surely the pursuit of coin by such a method was the very archetype of the slow and the laborious. Mrs. McChesney, bulkily placed in her capacious chair, limited herself to an obscure gurgle. She had no apprehension of Duke Guido's place in the general panorama of history, and she was content enough to let the dead past take care of itself. This ancient worthy gave her no more satisfaction than she had got the evening before, in the sala, from a view of certain treasures which the young collector had recently acquired and which were presently to be transferred to the family seat in Florence: a Madonna by Bonfigli, brought

from some passing monastery; a *cassone* or two, got from an impoverished neighbor in the depths of the mountains beyond; certain bas-reliefs, and so on. Futilities all—except possibly the *cassoni*.

For Caroline McChesney rather opined that too much "fuss" was made about art. In great formative periods, when forceful personalities profited by a wide freedom of private initiative, the decisive figure had always been the man of action and affairs. The artist had merely filled in the chinks. His work had decorated successful endeavor in Italy—just as it was coming to do in America. She herself, as the wife of a conspicuous *condottiere* of finance, believed in the rightful dominance of the strong hand and the keen brain. Such a man did not bow to custom; he helped to mould and impose it. Collective inferiority was quite as likely to acquiesce as to punish, and the audaciously exceptional presently became the accepted warp and woof of rule and regulation. This was creation—creation in its own kind. Art collecting might do for the diversion of a gentleman, but not for his chief concern. That, emphatically, was to rule and to tax. The dilettante had no place in her general scheme. Such a man would not have made a satisfactory husband for her. Such a man was no more likely to make a satisfactory husband for her daughter.

"He is a very nice fellow"—this was what Caroline McChesney really murmured over the battered countenance of old Duke Guido—"and he doubtless has force and abilities. But how are they to be brought into play? The family is not rich—evidences of that abound. Nor are they likely to become richer—in this country the tendency is generally downward. Up in the North, of course, the best young men go in for banking, engineering, even into certain sorts of manufacturing; but in this part of the land . . . "

She felt, without knowing it, the incubus of the classic past. If it bore upon her, a mere passing stranger, how much more automatic, constant, and inescapable was its pressure likely to be upon the young son of her hostess?

IV

With the lengthening shadows and the cooling air the ladies retired to prepare for the solemnity of dinner. The two young men lingered on the terrace. Twilight rose like an exhalation from the richly muffled valley, descended like a luminous cloud from the slopes and peaks by which the valley was enclosed. Between earth and air, the town, illumined by the level shafts of the disappearing sun, shone like a city of gold—a new and near Golconda, where

nuggets in abundance awaited him whose hand would but snatch, whose back would but stoop.

Bannister Grayle gloated over the prospect. During the day he had paid another visit to the city, and an intimate stroll through its streets and market-places had done little to impair the glamour of the shining aggregate. But the thing that had impressed him most was a certain grim old façade which rose in one of the chief ways with an effect of rough stateliness, despite boarded-up windows and an air of secular neglect. It stood idle and empty save for certain chambers on the ground floor used for the humble purposes of storage. But a rude bit of heraldic carving still survived on that perdurable front, and one who knew might recognize in it the star-faced stallion of the Stellini.

What a *point d'appui!* thought Grayle. With such a fulcrum, what might not one move! The least the new master of the old ruin could do would be to put glass in the windows; the most, to renovate it and reside in it as traditional seigneur for a few months of the year.

Ruggiero laughed when reminded of the old pile. "Yes, there it still stands, as it has stood since the Trecento. At different times the citizens have treated us in different fashions. Once, finding us outside, they fetched us in. Again, having us inside, they

sent us out. One way and another, we have made them a good deal of trouble. But we are out, now; we definitely regard ourselves as of Florence."

"Go back again. Trouble them some more. You are '*padrone*' to do it!"

Ruggiero smiled amusedly; and he kept on smiling as Bannister Grayle, filled by the poetry of the place and the hour, gave utterance to his inspired musings. He had cast his trained eye over the daily activities below, and had found them absurdly primitive and ludicrously unorganized. "Why, all the town's washing is done on the banks of the river—in cold water and with an enormous loss of soap-suds, not to say human muscle."

"As for dozens of generations."

"But the times are ripe for a change. Come; organize and direct the laundry interests of the town. The greatest of all, the servant of all; with the accent placed—properly—on the 'greatest.' Come; tax cleanliness."

"The Stellini have never taken in washing," said Ruggiero.

Grayle grinned. He was only dallying with the remote fringe of his subject. "And I noticed," he proceeded, "as I went through one of those little squares, a brisk market in lamps and candles. I inquired. Is it really true that your town, beyond two

or three of the principal streets, has no real system of lighting, not even gas——?"

"Our people live the natural hours of the natural man."

"Give them evenings, and tax them for them. Go before the municipal council and show the old fogies how the power of your mountain streams, now running to waste, is sufficient for the purposes of a system of lighting by electricity. First of all, put up big bunches of lights at the four corners of the Piazza Grande——"

"The Stellini have never been link-boys."

Here Grayle shrugged, with no pretense of grinning.

"It is a straight business proposition," he said, in a tone of pique. "You get a general authorization, covering every street; and from that time on you own them. The people of the town can then sit up after eight-thirty—and pay you roundly for the privilege."

"They are willing to go to bed early—and just as willing to get out of bed early. I doubt if they much care to change their habits."

"Well, then, here's another point," Grayle went on, with a more marked approach to seriousness: "the whole matter of transportation. Since the Government, in its infinite wisdom (or infinite neg-

lect), has left you without a railway—a town of seventeen thousand souls, mark that!——"

"The diligences have always served us."

"But how? What kind of service? Utterly casual, hap-hazard! And the few cabs that ply your streets—no system, no direction! While the thought of a tramway or two, I suppose, has never even entered the mind of the countryside. Now, take all these features, operating under a general franchise. If wires will help you to own the streets, how much more so will rails! And you needn't stop with your own town; trams to other towns, east and west, north and south."

"The Stellini have never been common carriers."

"Very well; let all that pass. Here is what I really mean: to-day the streets of your city, and all the roads leading in, are full of the traffic of produce. Everywhere great carts loaded with grain, fruit, casks of oil and wine; peasants trudging in with eggs, poultry, vegetables, the whole abundant tribute of autumn. All this traffic, again, is hap-hazard and unsystematized, paying no such tax as——"

"The *dazio* doesn't overlook it. Every single cabbage that comes in through Porta Stellini——"

"Porta Stellini? Named for you?"

"For us, assuredly."

"For how long?"

"As long as I can remember."

"How long is that?"

"Oh, some six hundred years."

"And there is also a Via Stellini?"

"A 'Via degli Stellini'—where our old house stands. But they are calling it, at present, the Corso Vittorio Emanuele."

"No, the *dazio* doesn't overlook this traffic, but the Stellini, the one-time lords of the city, do. It is for you to intercept, to regulate, to profit by, this great rich stream. Come, now; organize, control, monopolize——"

"The Stellini have never been highway robbers."

"What? Never highway robbers? You seriously maintain that? Once more, brace yourself; be worthy of your great ancestor and win the approval of the most advanced and enlightened public opinion. Resume the glories of your ancient house and——"

"The most advanced and enlightened public opinion?"

"That of America, of course. The small-minded here will hate you, but respect you; and surely a great man would rather be feared than loved. And when reports of your success cross the Atlantic, think how proud everybody will be that your good American blood has told! For if the Americans ad-

mire a man who can humbug, how much more do they admire a man who can plunder!"

"But our people, over here, are simple and direct —opposed to change and quick to resent attempts at imposition. They would be quite capable of rising——"

"You talk as if we were still in the midst of the Middle Ages. To-day the public grumbles, but it never acts. Are our magnates murdered? Are they even pelted? No; they walk the streets safely enough. My own father expects to die in his bed. To most people such men are only newspaper abstractions; the public never really meets them. The secret is to spread the tax so deftly that few, for a time at least, suspect its existence, and so equably that no man is sufficiently injured to prompt an individual vengeance."

"Only abstractions, eh? But the concrete exists, and now and then asserts itself in concrete form."

"Where people defer, as they do to you, they will submit."

"H'm," responded Ruggiero thoughtfully. The shades were deepening in the valley and the golden city was turning to gray. "Well, let us go in and dress for dinner," he said.

V

Dinner, with the Stellini, was a matter of traditional state; its rigors were fully maintained at Palazzo Montefalcone, in town, and not completely remitted at Villa Montefalcone, in the country. Here the more ready and nimble of the contadini were put into livery, and the feast went on with some cumbersomeness, but with an assurance that was all of "race" and little enough of money.

"Fortunate that they have the backing of their own pride," said Sibyl McChesney, in one of those exchanges of confidences between self and self from which even the most high-minded of guests is not to be wholly barred. "I tremble to think of the shortcomings were money alone relied on. If the furnishings in Florence date back to 1820, the liveries here——" Again she delicately refrained.

Not that the Stellini lived in decent poverty; they were people of substance in their own land and would have passed for well-to-do even in flushed and insolent America. For well-to-do, yes, but for little more; and Sibyl McChesney shuddered to think where a year in New York, if lived in commensurate state, would leave them.

Dinner followed dinner, as day followed day; and

young Ruggiero degli Stellini, offering the fruits of his own lands and the service of his own people, supposed that he was satisfactorily realizing in his own person the noblest type he had yet conceived—that of the country gentleman living in quietude, order, and comfort on his own ancestral acres. But soon, under the verbal manipulations of his guests, doubts began to insinuate themselves and a new ideal to gather shape. The prizes of life, it now became clearer to him, could not be secured in retirement; they must be snatched from the press and hurly-burly of the surging throng. His new friends exhibited human existence to him, not as a well-ordered system, but merely as a general scramble. They pointed across to a land wherein anything like a balance of rights and duties was replaced by the exercise of a dexterous, strong-armed greed. The contemplative life was naught; the life of action, all. The world, under its new aspect, was a carnival of energy and desire. The men forged ahead in an excess of nervous fury; the women took—nay, demanded—all that the men could give. . . .

"Yes," said Sibyl McChesney, one twilight evening over coffee on the terrace, "we girls expect a great deal. Fortunately"—with a shifting of her mop of golden hair and a half-veiling of her blue eyes—"the men understand, and the ambitious and ener-

getic among them exert themselves. No others, of course, count."

She saw open admiration on the dark, lean, intent face of her host. A tall blonde of a certain type (as she was well aware) had the Latin youth quite at her mercy. She herself had electrified the Pincian and had had things all her own way in the Florentine Cascine. She discovered, now, Ruggiero's panting eagerness to enroll himself among the "ambitious" and the "energetic." And, in fact, Ruggiero was fast moving to the point where nothing, beyond the distinguished consideration of Sibyl McChesney, was of much concern.

After all, she thought, one had but to be one's lovely self and to declare distinctly one's requirements. Her own mother had been beautiful and definite; and that mother's demands, manifold and insistent, had served immensely to promote the family's fortunes. Her daughter's earliest recollections of Caroline McChesney called up a slender young woman who was stating in direct and emphatic terms, to an abashed and harassed husband and father, just what she needed and desired and proposed to have. The lash had fallen, but the discipline had been salutary and the general result satisfactory—at least funds had always been forthcoming. Caroline McChesney had made her effort and made

it early; and now she was leaning back—had so leaned back for years—in well-fed ease.

Sibyl wondered to what extent the same determined line might be pursued before matrimony. Had her mother ventured to urge onward the young lover before the knot was actually tied? Had she dared strike her note even before the decisive word was spoken? How best fire an ambitious heart? How best awaken not merely love, but a retroactive gratitude? How apply stimulus and yet refrain from raising alarm? Sibyl addressed herself to the maternal monitor, and was given to understand that a general intimation of the requirements of an American girl of spirit and position would not necessarily be either immodest or *mal à propos.*

Sibyl began now, in all their walks, drives, and excursions, to ply Ruggiero with stirring tales of the lion-hearted brood she had left behind in her native city. She poured out legends of prowess on the stock exchange, romances of heroic adventures in running corners—all the thrilling *chansons de geste* of the various gallant spirits who, out of the nettle of speculation, had plucked the flower of fortune. She told, in particular, of one clever youth who had popped up in the highway with a fragmental franchise, useless to himself but essential to others, and had refused to budge until——

"Why, he made over half a million!" concluded Sibyl appreciatively.

"And soon afterward he proposed," she forgot to add. Others had proposed, too, and she had refused them as well. She demanded much, all. Not mere shrewdness, dexterity, mastery; but blood, title, prestige, besides. She never explained why she regarded all these fine things as her just deserts. She felt important; and if you feel important you are important—or are much more likely to become so.

Sibyl accompanied Ruggiero and Grayle in all their walks abroad, and saw for herself how competently the new heir had seized the reins and how cleverly he was likely to control the chariot of the family fortunes. She trudged with him through vineyard and olive-grove; she shared with him the obeisances of the populace in the market-place, where, under the huddle of brown and yellow umbrellas, the good old ways still were going on; and she was standing by his side in the Corso before the gray and seamed old heap of dilapidation which had once been the ancestral seat of his race at the thrilling moment when he decreed that all should be renewed.

"Good!" Grayle had cried; "it will be another ace in your hand!" And, "Good!" cried Sibyl herself, the one gracious spot in a none too poetical

nature being touched by her friend's lordly decision; "it will be an actual demonstration that—that—that——"

"That the glories of our house," said Ruggiero, with a little touch of pomp in his voice and a bright gleam of pride in his dark eyes, "have not altogether passed away." And his eyes expressed more than pride: they expressed the lofty homage of one who has much—and that of the rarest quality—to give.

Sibyl dropped her golden lashes. It was as if the dying torch of family prestige had been blown into flame for her alone.

Ruggiero's determination to reassert the family in the ancient Via degli Stellini was instantly noised abroad—it was as if the entire community had been awaiting his pleasure for a generation. An aged and indolent syndic, accompanied by a brace of panting councillors, was spurred on to make a laborious visit to the villa. Ruggiero received them in the great sala, amidst his Renaissance cabinets, and just under a cardinal and an admiral—portraits which, while authentic enough, would not quite have passed in fastidious Florence; and the Marchesa, clad in stately black, stood beside her magnanimous son and smiled approval. When Ruggiero announced that he meant to live in Palazzo Stellini for a month or two in every year, the three old townsmen bowed to the

ground; and they promised, on leaving, to give back the Corso Vittorio Emanuele its ancient name.

"The first trick taken!" cried Grayle jubilantly. "Go on, go on; the whole game will be yours. You may strip the coats from their backs and they will smile and thank you for your kindness."

"They merely ask that the car of Juggernaut shall roll over them," said Sibyl, smiling brilliantly on Ruggiero. "Well, gratify them. Roll."

VI

"I JUDGE from his letters," said Grayle, "that things are moving quite briskly."

"We ought to stop on our way back to Florence and see for ourselves," replied Sibyl McChesney. She had received one or two letters herself, but did not feel it necessary to mention them.

The pair were strolling among the bosky walks of the Pincian. Sibyl's slender figure and golden *chevelure* were leading the Roman youths captive. These susceptible creatures eyed Grayle too, but with no great approval; they appeared to envy him nothing but his inches and his company. It had been the same with Sibyl on the Chiaja at Naples: still another fortnight of adulation—or so she had made it seem.

"Let us stop off, by all means," said Grayle.

"If there were only a railway," Sibyl lamented. "Ten miles in a diligence—dirt, dust, crowds, garlic, poultry. . . ."

"We will hope for a carriage—under the new dispensation. Your mother?"

"Oh, she will go straight through, now that the Marchesa has returned to Florence."

"I am expecting almost anything," declared Grayle. "Now that he has started up, he gets a new idea every day. I never met a mind that had more breadth and clearness; he has grasped the situation in its entirety with an ease that—— Just let me read you a few lines from his last letter." Grayle's long, thin fingers sought an inside pocket. "If I were going to stay abroad beyond another month or two, I should certainly propose a partnership. Hear what he says about the old palace in the town: he has fully a score of workmen busy there—masons, carpenters, glaziers——"

"Never mind," interrupted Miss McChesney, who was as completely informed as Grayle himself. "Let me take it all as it comes."

It was a lowering day in November when they left the railway for their drive into the hills. The same diligence that had served them seven or eight weeks before was drawn up near the station, ready

for its daily journey; and there was the same choice between this plebeian vehicle and one of a couple of ill-conditioned *vetture*. "We shall have to take the better of these carriages," said Miss McChesney, with a choice little grimace. "It is too much to expect that the Marchese's new system should be complete in every detail already."

The ten miles of road were cumbered here and there with the belated traffic of autumn. Of all the carters, but one made way for them; and he, on second thought, seemed to regret having done so.

They rolled into town through the Porta Stellini. "Corso Vittorio Emanuele"—thus the street-sign on the first corner still read.

"Things *do* move slowly," acknowledged Grayle. "We must give the syndic and the council a little more time too."

Their carriage traversed the Piazza Grande. Again it was market-day. The brown and yellow umbrellas were unfurled; the stir and din of traffic filled the place. As their horse picked his way through piles of country produce, the market-people glowered; and it seemed as if those who did not look at all were still more resentful of their presence.

"Of course some degree of dissatisfaction is unavoidable," pronounced Grayle.

The carriage left the Piazza and resumed its way

through the Corso. It drew near to Palazzo Stellini. A few pedestrians were lingering in the way.

"Yes, he *has* been busy here," said Miss McChesney. Then she saw that glass had gone in only to come out. Jagged holes disfigured the window-panes, and a few fragments were felt to crunch beneath their wheels. The openings had been hastily barricaded by new timber, designed for other purposes.

"Something *has* happened!" exclaimed Grayle. The loiterers round them seemed to be neither friendly nor communicative. "Well, we will go on to the villa," he said, "as we intended."

Their driver's back, expressive in its determined lack of expression, ushered them out of town through another gate and into the open country. In serious silence the fellow began to climb the hill to the villa.

Villa Montefalcone extended but a rueful welcome. The great gates had been overthrown, the pleasaunces trampled down. Several urns, hurled from their plinths, lay cracked on the terrace; here and there a broken window, stuffed with rags, echoed the desolation first encountered in the Corso. Two or three grave peasants guarded the place from further harm.

"And your master?" asked Grayle.

"He is in Florence, signor," replied one of the men. "Nothing but his presence could calm his mother, the Marchesa."

Sibyl McChesney gave a low sob.

"He has failed, too," muttered Bannister Grayle.

* * * * * *

Grayle recovered his spirits by Arno. After all, failure—or so he devoutly hoped!—was the vestibule to final success. Nor would he reproach the young fellow for having apparently given up. Was not he himself now waiting for his second wind?

On the day following his return to Florence he met Ruggiero at the head of the Trinità bridge. The young man was composed, but there was reproach in his eyes. He gave his experience in a few sparse words.

"You were too direct, too obvious," protested Grayle. He began to perceive that manœuvres which may be possible among the complexities of a large community are impracticable amidst the simplicities of a smaller one.

"And they were too inflammable," rejoined Ruggiero. "Our people are quick to turn thought into action. If injured, they strike back. The fire is always there, and may blaze out on the moment."

Grayle was suddenly revisited by a picture from the East Side: a maimed child lay on the tramway,

and motorman and conductor were fighting for life against the assaults of a throng of dark-eyed immigrants. They had seemed to fall from the very air; they had combined with the instant force and effect of violent chemicals; they had striven to resent an obvious injury on the spot. He saw how it must have been with Stellini. An immemorial stock, firm in its convictions, wedded to its customs, had flared up and wounded and destroyed. But the trouble was merely that the young man had tried his experiment in the wrong quarter. He might still succeed in America. "Go back with me!" was the fatuous cry that rose to Grayle's lips. "Your name could be easily Anglicized," he proceeded. "I hope yet to see the name of 'Roger Sterling'—or something like that—on the list of American millionaires."

Ruggiero degli Stellini stared across the river, too disdainful for disdain. He was likely to change his name!

"You will not live in that old place this year, I suppose?" Thus Grayle broke the silence.

"This year, no. Next year, yes. I must make my peace with them—if that is possible."

"Aren't you very well off here?"

"'Here' is no more a part of me than 'there.' I have my place and my duty—a double one."

"Well, in any event, call upon us at our hotel—

the Italie. Miss McChesney will be very glad to see you; and so, doubtless, will her mother."

Ruggiero flicked an imaginary spot from his coat-sleeve as he endeavored to quiet down a recrudescence of the "direct" and the "obvious."

"I am afraid I cannot encourage you to count upon me," he replied. Without moving his limp arm, he made an easy outward gesture of hand and wrist; it meant that he considered Grayle to hold a fundamentally erroneous view of civilized life and that he was banishing him from its centre to its remotest outskirts. At the same time he executed a slight elevation of his darkly definite eyebrows; this meant that he regarded Sibyl McChesney as one who had a preposterously exaggerated idea of her own deservings and that he was dismissing her alike from his ken and from his country. "I shall be very busy during the coming fortnight," he went on—"both here and elsewhere. I fear I have no more time for you, even now. Good-day. Good-by."

A COAL FROM THE EMBERS

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I

"I envy you," I said, returning the letter, with a light sigh, into Melton's hands.

"She *does* write rather pleasantly, rather appreciatively, doesn't she?" he replied. He tossed back his grizzled locks and laid the sheets on his desk with a little smile of satisfaction that could not be suppressed.

But the smile implied something more than pleasure in the lady's mere "appreciation." Her letter held the plain promise of many other things—things that were to come along with great promptness and in full abundance.

"Why, you will have absolutely everything!" I cried. "You need but to hold your mouth open and your roasted capon will come sailing along, all seasoned and garnished, with knife, fork and napkin to boot. I envy you, indeed!"

"Oh, come, now, my dear Van Cott," protested Melton complacently; "I've got to do a little of the seasoning and garnishing myself, you know. And I shall have to provide my own knife and fork." He

motioned toward the range of neat pen-holders that rose above his big inkstand.

"But the piety of your widowed friend certainly provides the fowl—a good, fat one, too, if the promises of that letter are fulfilled. How soon do you expect the papers to arrive?"

"Within a week or two."

"Yes, you will have absolutely everything!" I repeated: "journals and diaries covering his entire career; all the original draughts of his manuscripts; letters that everybody wrote to him; copies of letters that he wrote to everybody: the whole carefully arranged in advance by the loving care of an adoring wife—why, I don't know that I've ever heard of the labors of a literary executor being more delightfully minimized!"

"'The Life and Letters of James Templeton Tabb,' in two volumes, crown octavo . . . ," murmured Melton dreamily, from the depths of his big easy-chair

"I'm sure I don't see how you could do it in any *less* space than that," I declared. "But how am I going to fill *my* two volumes? That's what I want to know. Tell me; tell me!"

I took a turn or so through the large, gaunt chamber, a retreat that was shuttered in from the September heat baking the white quays of Lungarno and

was cooled by the chalky mythologies of a high-vaulted ceiling. And I thought of other *literati*, from poets to pamphleteers, who also had sojourned at Pisa: how many of these, I wondered, had set the mill-wheel a-clatter only to find the mill-stream itself running dry?

"Yes, the 'Life and Letters of James Templeton Tabb' may be all very well," I went on; "but how about my 'Biography of John Edgar Haynes'? Have I come all the way from Florence for nothing? Speak, man; speak!"

Melton, from the depths of that comfortable chair, smiled on me again: it was such a smile as a man, safely berthed in the Land of Plenty, may bestow on a wretch astray in the sandy desert of general destitution. I felt myself hoping that the world might be found to care less for Tabb than his biographer expected.

Yet what ground for such a hope? Tabb—dead less than six months—had been a popular idol, almost a national institution, a voluminous "demonstrator" of the evolution of American politics and American society. For years he had sat behind his closed shutters in Philadelphia—just as his wife's friend was now sitting in Pisa—and had turned out his annual novel; and countless thousands (who may not have been greatly swayed by the latest influences

in thought and art) had read him around the evening lamp through long winter evenings in remote country towns. I myself—in Via Montebello, with Arno but a stone's throw away—did not light my lamp; the Tuscan daylight sufficiently betrayed the quality of these works. Yet no man had ever exercised his talent with more industry and more discretion, and to no man had come a wider reward. If his books were diffuse they at least offered bulk; and if they were pedestrian they could be followed all the better by multitudes that had no thought of soaring above good Mother Earth. Little wonder that Tabb had endured prosperously to the age of sixty-three, and had been able to arrange, in a methodical calm, for the perpetuation of his fame.

If Edgar Haynes had been but half so methodical! If he had not died a good twenty-five years before people were ready to discover him! If he had only displayed, while he *was* alive, a decent concern for his own work! But, no; quite the opposite in all respects. He had come abroad at the close of the War, a mere youth of twenty-two; had spent a few stormy years in the Val d'Arno—at Florence, Lucca and other places; had produced his verse with a careless spontaneity, though whether much or little no one could determine; and had died suddenly at Leghorn, in circumstances dimly tragic, at the early

age of twenty-eight. A kind of smothered celebrity had persisted through the years in his native Baltimore and had but lately leaped into something like a flame. Then, with incredible difficulty, a thin volume of his "remains" had been got together—nobody for a moment supposing that such a collection was at all adequate or representative; and then there came to me, as from an awakened country, a demand for his Life.

I was called upon to work in a vacuum. Next to nothing had come to light, nor was there the least indication that Haynes had cared in any degree for his tales and poems or for his future fame. Nobody would ever send to me, from his empty past, a big bundle of manuscripts, journals, letters and general memoranda—that was certain!

"Come, Melton," I cried, once more taking up my stride through his big bare room, while he shrugged at my young impatience, "lend a hand; make a suggestion. You've lived in this part of the world ever so many more years than I have. Find me a germ and help me to make it sprout. This absolute bareness of Tuscany is appalling; I shall be driven back to Baltimore—and that, just now, wouldn't suit me at all." Melton, indeed, might perform his cut-and-dried task as well in one somnolent town as another; I, on the contrary . . . "Well?"

"Don't go back to Baltimore," he rejoined. "Local pride, doubtless, has pretty closely gleaned that field already; besides, he left the place so young. Go back,"—here he condescendingly let fall a drop of dew upon the wide parched plain in which I was wandering,—"go back to Florence, and see Sophronia Wells."

II

I FOUND Miss Wells at home, though not alone. A solemn landau was standing before her door in that chaste, inexpressive little street, and I felt intuitively another addition to the long train of hitches, disappointments and minor *contretemps* that had thus far attended my progress.

Melton's first word about Sophronia Wells had been his last. "Where does she live?" I had asked. "Tell me something of her story!" I had implored. "Nothing more," he had replied. "Well begun is half done," he had added. "I have my own problem, just as you have yours," he had concluded. Then, for a definitive *congé*, "Your train leaves in twenty minutes."

Though I had been resident in Florence for rather better than a twelvemonth, no mention of Sophronia Wells had ever come to my ears. In September, however, the Anglo-Saxon population of

the town is at its minimum, and the tourist-tide subsides to nothingness; so it was only through the diminished resident colony that I was obliged to search. I found that Sophronia Wells was of almost infinitesimal importance (Melton, indeed, may have possessed nothing beyond her name and some vague recollection of having heard her story), but—I found her.

She came forward through the dim quiet of her small drawing-room, a slight, gentle little creature; but she loomed big in my eyes as the custodian of the Secret. She seemed to be nearing sixty; and though she struck me as so weak and defenceless, yet it was impossible for a man of thirty-three not to feel that an addition of fifteen or twenty years would greatly have smoothed his approach and simplified his task.

Defence developed at once, however. I became conscious that the farthest corner of the dusky little room contained a rustling, bristling personality that could hardly fail to assert itself. The closeness of quarters made introduction well-nigh obligatory, and I was almost immediately presented to the wearer of that highly articulate costume.

Lady Carapace seemed abundantly at home, but she did nothing to make me feel so. She had no real need to assert herself, but self-assertion, as I

had instantly divined, was the dominant trait of her nature. She soon moved into perihelion—if I may make the sole, amply-curtained window serve for the sun—and her address to the eye was not less aggressive than her earlier address to the ear. She was of about the same age as our hostess, but somewhat taller. Her gray hair was piled up and waved out to the fullest effect. She was richly dressed throughout in black—an appropriate "response" to the landau waiting below.

She walked not merely toward the window, but to it. She thrust the draperies aside with masterful action, and the sunlight, streaming in, fell upon a black bonnet of antiquated type that rested on the corner of a table. The bonnet was doubtless Miss Wells's own, but I was too deeply occupied with weightier matters to ask myself whether it had just been taken off or was just about to be put on.

Under the altered conditions, I could see Lady Carapace as clearly as I saw the bonnet. She had a firm mouth; she had immensely vivid black eyes, under brows that still remained dark despite her whitened hair; and she had an *andatura* that was in the highest degree expressive of nervous tension. "She is like a coiled spring," I thought. "She has waited a long time to let loose; but when she does . . . !"

However, she controlled herself for the present, though she gave evidence, now and then, of a slight impatience. She spoke but little—deeming, perhaps, that her one eloquent action sufficed; yet I decided, on hearing her, that her speech (however far wrenched from its original moorings and however much overwashed with other usages and other tongues) was the speech of an American.

Miss Wells, meanwhile, was glancing in hesitation from one caller to the other; she caught, I hope, a few of the low, hurried words in which I pleaded for an opportunity. The spectacle of a robust, high-colored young man seated in extreme trepidation on the edge of one of her frail chairs must have had its interest; for she presently went over to Lady Carapace, with a repentant glance toward the bonnet, and said propitiatingly:

"If you will excuse me to-day, dear Hortense . . ."

It was the day for their weekly drive in the Cascine, I afterward learned—a festival that had repeated itself on successive Tuesdays for years; but the drive in the Cascine was not a novelty, while I—in all modesty—was. Without being too mysterious, without seeming to promise too much, I won my point; for my sake Sophronia Wells strained a little the one link that bound her to society, and Lady Carapace presently rolled away alone.

The coast was clear. The field was open. I prepared to take the first step in it. The first step *does* cost, and as I realized what it was to cost us both, I grew to feel even bulkier and ruddier than before. I was a ruffian who had forced his way in for the purpose of violating the tenderest memories of this trembling, shrinking little creature. However, she was not altogether defenceless even yet. At every advance of mine, Lady Carapace, though absent, became present and rushed to the rescue. When I left, at the end of an hour, I had not gained greatly on Edgar Haynes, but I was possessed of a character-sketch of Hortense Carapace and of a good portion of her biography.

The two women—so the story fell on the hushed September air of Florence—had been girls together in Washington, during the closing years of the War. Or, rather, Hortense Culver had queened it at the Capital, while Sophronia Wells had grown up in a quiet old house set among the reverberant, cobble-stoned streets of Alexandria—they, perhaps, had provided the only tumult that had ever entered the tranquil garden of her life. The political sympathies of her friend's family seemed to have remained in discreet uncertainty during the great struggle, for wealth breeds caution; and the fortune of the Culvers survived unimpaired. Sophronia herself had

been led abroad, by some diplomatic connection, in the earliest years of young womanhood; and various events—they remained unrecounted—had kept her on the Continent almost ever since. Hortense Culver, meanwhile, had wilfully taken her fate into her own hands. With no great regard for the wishes of her family, she had married a young officer in the English navy whom the dawn of peace found at Washington; and the two friends had next met in Florence itself, while the *Ariadne* was stationed at Leghorn.

"It was at Leghorn," I began, "that Edgar Haynes——"

"All might have gone on well enough," continued Sophronia Wells precipitately, "if her husband hadn't suddenly and most unexpectedly fallen into a title and a fortune. It unsettled him; it demoralized him; for some reason, it turned up the worst side of his nature. Her own fortune now seemed of less consequence to him; and there was, too, still less appreciation for a fine girl from a man who was essentially a clod. He—he mistreated her; and be sure she had too much spirit to submit. Resistance against a man of that type . . ."

"Well?"

"Physical violence—it came to that. Yes, he actually struck her, and more than once. He left the navy almost immediately upon his access of good

fortune, but they spent two or three months here—a tolerably conspicuous stage, as you do not need to be told. Everybody knew the situation; it was martyrdom for a girl who had always held the highest opinion of herself—and held it justly, too. Here she was, openly misprized by the one man upon whom had been bestowed the honor and privilege of learning her full worth. There was great indignation in Florence, especially among the young Americans. The English, anyway, as you can understand, were not particularly popular at the close of the War."

"What became of Lord Carapace?"

"He died as the result of a brawl at Leghorn." Carapace had endeavored, it transpired, to impose his imperious will upon certain humble yet high-spirited folk who were ignorant of his "quality," and had passed away in a suburban villa at his leisure. "Hortense refused to go to his people, or to return to her own. She determined, at however great a disadvantage she might be, to compel the respect of Florence. She has lived here almost uninterruptedly for the last thirty-five years."

"She must look upon me as a mere interloper."

"Oh," said Sophronia Wells, with the kindest little voice in the world, "it may be long before she comes to look upon you as anything at all!"

"I wonder," said I. Then: "I hope Edgar Haynes was one of the young Americans who rallied to her defence?"

Miss Wells became slightly more remote. "He had less reason than some of the others," she said guardedly. "He and Carapace were alike in their political sympathies. Edgar—Edgar Haynes was in the Confederate cavalry during the last months before Richmond."

"All the same——" I began; for the existence of a considerable reservation was reasonably clear.

"Hortense Carapace," pursued my hostess, without allowing the smallest chink of time to intervene, "has made herself a high position here and has held it steadily for years. She is always busy, always active——"

"*I* have found it difficult to be busy in Florence—always," I said, smiling.

"Then you have but yourself to blame," Miss Wells pronounced, with an unexpected sturdiness. "If you have the gift of writing, you need only dig; every thrust of the spade turns up something, here. Hortense herself has brought out a few things on Florentine art and history——"

"Who hasn't?" I muttered.

"She is very clever with her pen, and her writings are highly appreciated by those whose appreciation

is most worth while." Miss Wells rose, and I saw that the term of my visit was near. "Don't be surprised that I have told you these things," she said. "They are still likely to be heard by the newcomer, and I prefer to have them heard aright."

"But——" I began, rising too. And I started in to plead for information that would help me to reconstruct the Florentine years of Edgar Haynes. I begged for the faintest bit of reminiscence. I implored to be put on the track of the slightest shred of manuscript or of letter. "I have nothing—nothing!" I said, with pathos.

Her hand was now on the door, and she opened it.

"There *are* things at Lucca," she breathed; "but" —with a slow, searching pathos that far surpassed my own—"he—he won't give them up." Then she gently closed me out.

What was that but an invitation to come again?

III

"Yes, of course she expects to see something more of you," said Melton. He had run over from Pisa for one of his occasional visits and we were standing under the arches of the Uffizi. The first autumn showers had cooled the air and given some volume and motion to the yellow river. "You have

had an immense success with her," he added; "more —a triumph."

"Umph!" I echoed. "I shall call again, be sure. I am not altogether without urgings. They are writing from Boston to inquire what progress I have made. Shall I rest content with reporting no progress at all?"

"No progress at all! Why, I've carried you half way, and Sophronia Wells half of the remaining half. And I have a notion that she means to carry you still farther. But there's this difference between us: I ask no reward; she does."

"What reward?"

"She has been very gracious to you, and now she wants you to get her those papers at Lucca, which she has probably been after for years. She has become a good European—everything is to be paid for."

"Umph!" I said again. Then—"How is your own enterprise coming on?" I inquired.

"Well, I have looked into the journals and through some of the correspondence. An immense mass of material, and already put together in the most orderly way." He paused for a moment. "Mrs. Tabb writes that she is busy now with arranging for a publisher."

"Why, is that point still open?" I asked.

"So it seems," he replied, a bit morosely.

"I should want a firm basis for so important a piece of work," I observed. "And I should think the house that published his novels would naturally ——"

"Yes, naturally," echoed Melton, with a touch of dejection. "Doubtless it will all arrange itself," he added in conclusion.

He fanned himself rather pettishly with his hat, though the day was not warm, and looked unseeingly at the shops that barnacle the Ponte Vecchio. "Go again to Sophronia Wells in a day or so. You will probably find her adjusted to you and with a mind made up."

"Up to what?"

"Oh, to many things. Come; cultivate your intuitions."

"You might tell me something," I reproached him.

"I don't know anything *to* tell—only a few old bits of half-remembered gossip. You asked for a 'germ,' and I have given it to you. Go ahead."

"Ahead" I went. The air, to be sure, was dark around me, but there was a semblance of firm ground under my feet. I called on Miss Wells again that afternoon; this time she was alone.

She welcomed me almost as an old friend. Whether I was to account this reception as a personal triumph, indeed, or but as a measure of the general emptiness

and aridity of her existence I did not attempt to decide. This time the talk turned as directly as inevitably to Edgar Haynes, and this time she did not attempt to fob me off. Lady Carapace was not once mentioned—as I often had occasion to recall.

She soon perceived that if she was to enlist me for the campaign at Lucca she must first pay me my earnest-money. Within twenty minutes I was holding the "queen's shilling" in my hands—or, in other words, the authentic portrait of Edgar Haynes. It was a small primitive product of the earlier days of photography, but a gallant little affair, all the same; and I took to my protagonist at once. He was a keen, spare, dark young fellow, in the uniform of the Confederate cavalry. "I wouldn't have had him otherwise!" I cried appreciatively.

Sophronia Wells hovered above me, with an air of fond trepidation, as if suspecting that I might convert her "shilling" into a pocket-piece. "He was a sword without a scabbard," she said, in a mere murmur.

"Yes, yes!" I assented eagerly. "He was all edge, all temper, and our crass, dull world wore him out."

"I have always— I like the way his hair falls over his forehead," she said.

"And I." It was a bold, sweeping wave that followed the romantic convention of the day. But the

big, dark eyes and the clear-cut chin and nose would have made their effect in any day at all.

"I—I have a volume of his poems," she went on softly. She bent in the dim light and produced it from the depths of a complicated old desk. It was a slight affair of some thirty pages, in plain boards—"Barbèra, Firenze, 1868."

"Why, they're in Italian!" I cried. "And they're not known in America at all!"

"They made him known here," she submitted. "He was remembered several years. He is remembered yet."

I ran through a number of the pieces. They showed the simple forms, the restricted vocabulary, the familiar and almost obligatory rhymes and locutions of the poet who chooses to go adventuring in an alien tongue; but there were underlying traces of fire and passion, all the same—an exotic fervor distinct enough from the facile surface-pother of the immemorial race of native *poetucci*, *poetini*, *poetelli*, *poetastri*, what you will.

"He wrote with ease in both languages," said Sophronia Wells. "I have other poems of his in English."

From still more retired recesses of that mysterious and complicated old desk she produced a half-dozen sheets of frayed and faded manuscript. Most of the

poems were sonnets and all of them were signed. For the first time I was looking upon my hero's penmanship. His signature itself was executed with a bold, breezy confidence that almost rose to insolence. The chirography of the verses themselves was somewhat less unchastened; here the lion paid the delicate tribute of roaring as gently as a dove. However, most of the pieces possessed, in their subject-matter, a mild conventionality well suited to their artificial form and to such ascriptions as these: "To Ianthe," "To Zelinda," and the like. But they were really one and all "To Sophronia"; and the last of them, directly so entitled, had a touch of intimacy and of power that rather raised it above the rest. With a proper shade of sympathy and reverence I read it aloud.

Sophronia Wells brought back her soft, old, meditative eyes from vacancy and looked at me a little puzzled and disconcerted. "No," she said; "let *me* read it." And I perceived that the sacred conventions of tone, rhythm, pause and inflection, established by more than thirty years of solitary rehearsal, were not to be disturbed without protest and correction.

The depths of the old desk yielded nothing more that day, but I presently felt Miss Wells to be hovering—though with a fine, intangible reluctance—upon

the outskirts of Lucca. The second step, I saw, was to cost even more than the first.

As the past returned—it came briefly, brokenly, fragmentally, with many a lapse and halt—I felt a new presence stealing upon the stage. It was that of Donna Francesca Aradolfi, a shadow even among shades.

As Donna Francesca grew in form and substance —she did not grow far—I felt impelled to suppress my intuitions, for the time being, as rigorously as possible. I have a kind heart and a tolerably tell-tale face, and I dared not venture upon a course of conjecture and speculation until I had withdrawn from my hostess's presence. Suffice it to say that it was not for the modest and self-contained Sophronia Wells that Edgar Haynes had thrown away his scabbard; it was not upon her cool marble breast that he had wrecked his blade. Yet it was impossible to refrain from attempting to arrange the chronology of these various events or to surmise why those voluminous papers were darkly bestowed somewhere in Palazzo Aradolfi at Lucca rather than in the cumbrous old seicento cabinet at my elbow.

"And Donna Francesca is still alive?" I asked.

"She has been dead twenty years. It is her brother, Count Cerini, that you are to see. He was but a boy at the time."

Sophronia Wells would say no more. I saw that I must date "the time" for myself and arrange an approach to the Count as best I might.

IV

Lucca received me pleasantly, as she receives everybody; not so Palazzo Cerini, whose master, I was hoping, would consent to shed some light upon a dark matter. Its inexpressive façade was far from agleam; and all that its inhospitable *portone* could communicate was the Count's absence from home and town alike: despite the lateness of the season, he was still lingering at the Bagni, a good fifteen miles away.

I had no desire to participate in the languors of the waning *villeggiatura*, but the recollection of my last view of Sophronia Wells in Florence now prompted me to continue the chase. On my way to the railway station I had encountered Lady Carapace's landau in the Piazza S. Maria Novella, with the two life-long friends seated side by side; they were proceeding, doubtless, to their weekly fête in the Cascine. Miss Wells, who probably divined my errand, ventured a smile and a slight gesture of encouragement; and Lady Carapace, prompted possibly by her companion, gave conventional expression to

her consciousness of my existence—a step that, in the light of future events, she never could have deemed misplaced.

Inquiries through the thinning society of the Bagni put me close upon the track of Cerini and gave me some valuable hints as to his character. Even before meeting him I had gathered his weariness of provincial life and his penchant for hovering—with greater or less acceptance—upon the outskirts of a *monde* more urban than that of his native town. For the present the mere transplanted gayety of the Bagni di Lucca seemed to serve, but no doubt he had aspirations toward Florence itself; and when I found him yet haunting the precincts of the all but deserted Casino, these various points became clearer still.

He was a black-bearded man of forty-five, square and stocky—"tarchiato," to use a word which the language provides to describe a type that the land itself produces so abundantly. As I carefully engineered him over the road along the chestnut-shaded banks of the Lima, he developed a theoretical knowledge of the Florentine aristocracy that was little less than uncanny. He knew the names and exploits of such of its younger members as gave themselves over to fox-hunts and steeple-chases, and he seemed possessed by a fascination for the insular

aristocracy that had been the means of introducing all these incongruous things into Tuscany. He lost himself in reminiscences of certain "teas" to which more than one kindly English lady had invited him during the past month; and at a sudden turn in the road he stopped as a young man passed by on horseback.

"See; that is Gino Giannoni. His brother, the Marchese, has all his linen laundered in London."

I endeavored to turn his thoughts from high society to the lowlier concerns of literature, and to touch, with caution, upon the recent history of his own family. The attention he gave, however, was but grudging.

"I recall vaguely the young man you speak of," he said finally. "Indeed, I remember having once come across a volume of his poems among a lot of old papers. I thought rather poorly of them."

"No poet can do justice to himself in a foreign tongue," I maintained. "What sort of verse would you produce in English, or even in French?"

"I am no poet in any language," he said curtly. But he acknowledged the existence of "old papers," and I pressed the point. Among them, I represented, were doubtless manuscripts that would give my Haynes a higher standing as a poet than the Count

at present conceded, and a higher interest as a man. Surely it would be an honor, even to his illustrious family, to be associated publicly with the name of one whom the world was coming to regard as a genius. It would all be another adornment for Italy itself, where nations were bestirring themselves to the purchase of houses in which their exiled poets had sojourned, however briefly.

Yes, yes, the Count acknowledged, his country had indeed been the subject of much attention from poetical foreigners. "But," he added bluntly, "I do not consider that all these people have honored Italy. I hold that, in praising Italy, they have only honored themselves."

I was reduced to murmuring the customary banalities about "human documents," and the "psychological interest" of the "intimate" side of "genius," and the "influences"—especially the "feminine influences"—that . . .

But Cerini, who had not yet come fully abreast of modern subtleties nor risen to an appreciation of modern publicities, stared at me with a dogged searchingness that was discouraging to the last degree. In fact, I was face to face with that rare phenomenon, a Tuscan who was "dour."

As we moved along the shaded banks of the rippling river, his concern for the *beau monde* seemed

to deepen. Such a villa, he pointed out, was occupied by the Duchessa This; such another by the Contessa That; and a third, before which he must needs pause, had been vacated but a fortnight ago by an English "miledi," the Signora di Carapace. He gave the name an Italian twist, pronouncing it in four syllables, and in the light of his own strange illumination found it a "*cognome delizioso*"—one charmingly suited, he felt, to a wealthy widow.

"You have met Lady Carapace?" I asked.

"N—no," he replied, "But you?"

"Oh, yes," I returned; "I saw her only yesterday." My thought travelled back from the carriage as seen in the square to the same carriage as seen in the Via delle Monache. I perceived, now, that my earliest call on Sophronia Wells had interrupted a reunion following upon months of separation, and felt my triumph grow.

Cerini talked on about the brilliant doings of his memorable September. Clearly I could get at him through but one gate—that of high society. The implacable palace-front at Lucca seemed a thousand miles away, and the manuscripts huddling behind it retired to the vanishing-point. I determined, if need be, to annex Lady Carapace and all her train, and to make the Count acquainted with a number of people who, for the greater part of their lives, had

had their linen laundered in London the glad year through.

V

Lady Carapace had a feeling that it was but decent to be indulgently hospitable to the native gentry. They had always been great frequenters of her Thursday evenings, and now, at the opening of a new season, they mingled loyally with the Anglo-Saxons in her salon. In this salon, I had determined, Count Cerini should begin—one provincial noble, more or less, would make little difference.

But first I was obliged to gain the entrée myself. I signified to Sophronia Wells my appreciation of Lady Carapace's growing consciousness of me and intimated that an extension of her friend's humane consideration would by no means come amiss. I declared it as desirable; I insisted on it as essential.

Sophronia Wells hesitated. That puzzled me. Did she have objections? Did she entertain scruples? Did she draw the line at Cerini? Did she feel misgivings about me? But whatever considerations may have moved her—or have restrained her—she put none of them into articulate form, and I accompanied her to the next of her friend's receptions. And to the next following I introduced Cerini. As a recent widower—though not too re-

cent—he grasped gladly at the pleasures of the "world."

Celebrities abounded, official and otherwise. Decorations were numerous; conversation was animated and brilliant. There was a strong subcurrent of speculation on Lady Carapace's latest enterprise, which, under its provisional title of "Les Femmes Incomprises," was already a work of some fame. There was good music, as well, and a supper that seemed lavish to Tuscan frugality.

The experience pleased Cerini immensely, and I hastened to impress him, unobtrusively, with the fact that it was to me his gratitude was due. To deepen his burden I applied to Melton, who was as much at home in Florence as in Pisa, for letters and introductions; and within a week Cerini was more gallantly afloat upon the cosmopolitan bosom of Florentine society than I myself had ever come to be. In another week he was prepared to listen reasonably to my references to the papers, and very soon thereafter he had promised to dig them out and to look over them on my behalf.

"I certainly shall part with nothing that concerns my sister," he declared; "but as for the rest, we shall see."

A few days after his return—a temporary one—to Lucca I received a large packet. It contained a

miscellany of letters, journals, and manuscripts—all in complete disarray, as if summarily edited by scant experience and a heavy hand.

"It's chaos!" I cried, surveying the litter that cumbered my desk and covered the floor. "But out of this chaos I may evoke the clear personality of Edgar Haynes. To work!"

Naturally I appraised the biggest nuggets first. The biggest of all was a considerable fragment of a romance. It was in a state of reasonable finish; and other fragments, in the way of sketch, study, and synopsis, which developed in the course of the long and crowded afternoon, helped to give a good idea of the author's scope and plan. The tone was romantic and lyrical; it was the poet working in the larger and looser form, but the poet still.

Next came a series of journals in square, thin, black books. One of the set was missing altogether, and another had undergone off-hand expurgation through the tearing out of a score of sheets. "Thanks, Count, for this!" I muttered. Cerini's limited acquaintance with English had probably heightened his alarm; like the Russian censor, he had proceeded less from knowledge than from a fearsome ignorance.

Next, a number of short tales intact. Dipping into them here and there, I found that they dealt,

quasi-historically, with Italian society in its earlier days of decadence. Haynes had drawn inspiration from Cinthio and Grazzini; he had been fascinated by the splendid corruption that had stirred the dread amaze of Webster before him, and had added an eerie grotesquerie of his own. "How he felt it!" I could not but exclaim.

Beyond these, a general sediment of miscellanea—letters, poems, what not. Weeks would be required for a proper examination of them; yet some single page from this great coil might outvalue all the larger and more serious matters that had gone before. I seized upon a few sheets of verse that had been loosely stitched together and began to scan them. "Oh, patience, patience!" I cried aloud, laughing at myself. And, "Oh, system, system!" I added in the next breath; for here was material requiring the orderly examination of weeks, months. My hand next strayed, at a venture, toward a packet of letters—it was one of many—that seemed to have been loosened for a cursory examination and then tied up again with no great care or skill. "Now, then," I said, willing to prolong my preliminary survey before settling down to the regular siege; "let's see what these come to." And I opened them.

They were letters from Edgar Haynes to Hortense Carapace.

Now that the heart of the mystery merely awaited my plucking, I confess I quailed. I felt the need of an older head and a steadier hand. I wrote summoning Melton. Within a day or two he came.

In the meanwhile I had done something to bring the great mass of material to order. I saw in the immediate future not only the Life and Letters of John Edgar Haynes, but also his Complete Works, since manuscript—subject, of course, to the most thorough editing—was in hand for at least three volumes: by no means had my Edgar idled away those golden Tuscan days. I burrowed, too, among the minor "remains"—savoring poems, nibbling at correspondence, and, above all, assimilating to myself that one packet of letters from the significant spring of 1866.

When Melton appeared I went at once through the decent preliminaries of asking about the progress of his own work. He was not enthusiastic; on the contrary, he was almost despondent.

"I confess," he said, "that I had not expected to find the commercial side so much in evidence. His own publishers, too! Still, there is a certain public that will read a man's books to any extent, and yet feel no great concern about the personality of their author. Perhaps all this hesitancy is justifiable, for Tabb's public may have been of that sort. However,

it is dreadfully puzzling to his poor widow, and—and immensely exasperating to me."

Despite his own preoccupations and uncertainties, he seized with avidity upon the spoils of Lucca. There was eagerness in his long fingers and a friendly envy in his good, gray eyes. "A chance for the real creative touch!" he cried. His own work on the correct life and well-ordered records of James Templeton Tabb had fallen to the level of ungrateful and insipid routine.

"And that eager firm in Boston," I said; "at last I can say something to satisfy them. Here is a letter from them; they have been harrying me again."

"It's I, now, who envy you," said Melton, in all sincerity.

We agreed that the romance, the stories, the poems, and the diary might wait their turn in a scheme of work presently to be established: the one burning question was that bundle of letters to Lady Carapace.

"She must know of them? She must see them?" said I, inviting an affirmative.

"Beyond doubt," acquiesced Melton.

"But I am entitled to master their contents first?" I went on, inviting a second.

"Certainly," returned Melton, with all the promptness of which a literary executor was capable.

He spent the day with me, and we mastered them

together. Lord Carapace was again alive, in all the violent insolence of a sudden and unlooked-for prosperity. Florence was the new capital of the new kingdom, and upon this glaring stage the delicate, high-spirited young bride was flouted and abused. Haynes, young too, half an open friend and half a latent lover, poured out his indignation and sympathy on many a rapid, nervous page. He had met her at a ball, on the second evening after his arrival, and had divined the misery that was already overshadowing her. A little later he had seen her driving with "the brute" in the Cascine, and had scarcely been able to restrain himself from——

"H'm, h'm; this is very violent indeed," murmured Melton.

"He was only twenty-two," I said in defence.

Again, he had beheld her—"beheld," that was the word—at the opera, jewelled and smiling at the front of her box, to maintain an appearance which, his heart told him, was but a cruel and odious fraud—and suspected for such by half the world around them. In the next letter he was stealing upon her in one of the great saloons of the Pitti—her husband, meanwhile, had strolled away to another room—and was pouring into her ear, under cover of Titian and Raphael, the rhapsody of his boundless sympathy and devotion. Later on he was sending musicians to

serenade her and was lingering beneath her window to catch the flower that——

"Such latitude might be allowed, in the circumstances," I admitted.

"And here," said Melton, looking up from another sheet he had just unfolded on his own account, "he is waiting for her with a carriage and pair and the expectation of an immediate flight."

"A delicate matter," I acknowledged. "We know, however, that she did not go!"

He pondered. "Well," he said presently, "there is nothing, thus far, that it would seriously embarrass her to recall. I think you may submit these letters to her without causing any serious complications."

I submitted the letters and—the complications followed.

VI

Lady Carapace received me amidst the familiar pomps of her great salon. She had a look of preoccupation on her face and a small ink-stain on her forefinger. I surmised that she had risen from her "Femmes Incomprises," and I was glad to think that I might speak to her on delicately intimate matters as one literary person to another.

My first mention of Edgar Haynes produced little impression. Was that troop of unhappy ladies still

in full tenancy of her thoughts, or was Haynes but a faded memory, after all? Yet when I supplemented names with dates preoccupation vanished and a fine dignity and reserve took its place. The importance of the "period" was evident; less evident the importance of the personality that, for me, dominated it.

I produced the letters. Lady Carapace faced the situation with a cool cautiousness; nay, with what I may call—so little did she rise to my anticipation of drama—a bland impassivity. Was there so much to conceal; or was there, as yet, so little to express?

"I remember the young man," she presently said, in her deep, vibrant contralto: "one figure among the many of a crowded season." She half closed her eyes, as if recalling his image. Then she drew me a leisurely sketch of his person; in all essential respects it agreed with the portrait so long cherished by Sophronia Wells. "I think, too, that he gave me a volume of his poems—with an inscription, of course;" and she smiled slightly. "I may have it somewhere, though I have not thought of it for years. Yes, yes; that was long ago; but it all comes back."

"It all comes back." Was that the most she could say?

"From whom did you obtain these letters?" she inquired.

I mentioned Cerini. She smiled no more, but looked at me with increased intentness.

"You will of course favor me with an opportunity to examine them?" she said, eying the little packet with a glance I could not at all translate.

"Assuredly," I said, and left the letters in her hands.

From Lady Carapace I went to Sophronia Wells. Though I no longer regarded Miss Wells as a major figure, I thought it but right to inform her that the papers at Lucca had been recaptured. She listened with a wide-eyed anticipation that might demand anything. She was not particularly grateful for the single tale and the few bits of verse I presented as evidence; I perceived that, for years, she had been looking upon the obscure remains at Palazzo Aradolfi, and later at Palazzo Cerini, as her own proper possessions, and that my bringing the entire booty into her cramped little drawing-room would not have been taken as giving her more than her just due.

I spoke of the prospect of a complete edition of our author's works, and referred briefly to journals and correspondence. Then I touched upon the letters I had left with Hortense Carapace.

Sophronia Wells, who had been standing thus far, suddenly sat down. Her face blanched and her

hands were atremble. Much as her spirit had conned the papers at Lucca, it had never conned them to any such purpose as this.

Then she rose and walked toward the cabinet.

"I have letters from him, too," she said; and I saw that the cabinet was now to make its ultimate communication.

"Read them," she said, as she put the last treasure of all into my hands.

She bent above me as I sat and deciphered those faded sheets. She was articulate neither with tongue nor with pen, but she stood there ready to maintain her position as she apprehended it and to defend the treasured ideas familiar through long, lonely years. Other women there might have been, but she was the first of them all—the earliest to engage the young soldier's fresh affections, the one most delicately worshipped, the one most scrupulously respected.

Respect, indeed, as I could not but feel, was the real base of these epistles. The poet exhibited a certain superficial gallantry and floridity proper to his period and his origins; yet the essential texture of his letters was that of reverential friendship. To have taken such for love was but a celestial error.

Little enough of respect had developed, however, in other quarters. The diary made copious references,

in 1867, to a certain flaunting wayside blossom called Teresa, or Teresina, who had flourished at Pistoja. Her reign, though brief, seemed to have been absolute, and I could not afford to ignore the possible effect of such a figure upon the other personages in the drama. I communicated my facts and conjectures to Melton and asked him whether, on some journey to or fro, he could not pause at Pistoja and make inquiries. He readily promised this—a further sign that the "Life of James Templeton Tabb" was losing savor. A successful biography must have incident, of course—and some certainty of an audience.

A few days later I called upon Lady Carapace to get back the letters. She flatly refused to surrender them. They had been "intercepted," she said. "They have been withheld from me for years," she declared, with a fulgurant face; "but at last they are mine, Mr. Van Cott—mine!"

This was her stand, immovably. She had had time to think things over—we may imagine how far back and how deep down she had gone!—and within that time her nature had recrystallized. It was adamant already.

I protested; I pleaded; I argued; I ran the whole gamut of representation. But Hortense Carapace, like Edgar Haynes, had thrown away the scabbard.

She, too, had extricated herself from the dull sheathing of stale amenities and of flaccid acquiescences, and was preparing to swing the fiery brand of a personality liberated at last from all the smooth conventions—a new Bellona. I saw that she intended not only to keep the letters, but to use them. The early recollections of conjugal misprision still rankled; now, finally, she was enabled to put herself forward as a shining star worshipped by a *bel esprit* of the first water. She meant to show herself reflected in his face, and to link herself indissolubly to the history and the literature of two lands.

The letters, then, were lost. I fell back on Melton—feeling perfectly sure, by this time, that he was much more interested in my affair than in his own. He came to me after a few days, and not only counselled me with regard to Lady Carapace's high-handed act—of which more in abundance, presently—but also gave me the result of his inquiries at Pistoja.

A simple recourse to the authorities and their records had put him at once upon the track. Thanks to the serenity that comes from a good conscience, the Teresina of earlier days was still alive; and thanks to the static qualities of Italian life, she was still a resident of her native town.

"An obese baggage," continued Melton; "the wife of a *pastajo*. I took them together in the midst

of their *gnocchi* and *vermicelli*. She showed a native intelligence that I shall not underestimate; her husband, too—a chinless individual, with watery blue eyes—seemed ready to welcome any belated celebrity that might descend, however obliquely, upon his house."

"Is anything *written* likely to develop?" I asked.

"I should be inclined to think not," he replied.

"Faugh!" I cried; "there is little edification in all this. I don't want to imperil the poetical atmosphere that I have determined to establish and to maintain. Let her pass."

"You want the real truth, don't you?" asked Melton, in sober reproach. "In a drama like this, one character, however humble, may have been able to influence another, however high. You've already said as much yourself."

"Oh, drop it!" I cried. "Tell me what is to be done about Lady Carapace."

He looked at me thoughtfully. "H'm!" he said.

"You made that observation once before," I objected.

"I make it again," he returned. "And what I say I stand by. H'm!"

"Listen!" I cried. "Lady Carapace, so Miss Wells says, has begun on her 'Memoirs.' She has put aside the 'Femmes Incomprises,' dropping Madame

de Maintenon in the midst of her career, and has started up on 'The True Story' of her 'Relations,' and so forth and so on. She has been reading Haynes's Italian poems and has found meanings and allusions that nobody else ever suspected, and all these allusions point, of course, directly to her. She has set to work to refurbish her poet's fame: she has been in communication with the Florence correspondent of the Athenæum, and she has written to America for a volume of his Poems, in English. If any dealer in old libraries or any proprietor of a second-hand book-stall can serve her, that early issue shall be found. She has appropriated my hard-won materials and is forestalling me on every important point. Thus far she has refused me even copies of those letters. What will the people in Boston say? Come, help me."

"H'm," said Melton deliberately. "Doesn't it occur to you to ask if those letters really are letters?"

"What!" I cried in astonishment.

"I have had a week to think things over," proceeded Melton imperturbably, "and I have concluded that your 'letters' are merely rhetorical exercises—the direct product of a fluent fancy that felt the irresistible impulse to put itself through its own paces."

"Your reasons?" I asked.

"My first reason is a purely material one. None of those letters was found in any sort of envelope. I doubt if a single one of them was ever sent, or meant to be sent."

"Nonsense!" I cried. "You are material indeed—to the farthest verge of the immaterial. Don't you suppose that Hortense Carapace or Francesca Aradolfi could have——?"

"My second reason is based on internal evidence," Melton progressed. "Not one of those letters makes reference to letters in response. Not one of them touches upon a real experience in common. The correspondence is completely one-sided."

"A matter of simple gentlemanly caution!" I exclaimed. "Surely he had no desire to involve——"

"And from my second reason depends my third," Melton went on solidly. "The series exhibits essentially but one person, proceeds from but one point of view. There is no real incident, no interplay of personalities. In other words, nothing is dramatic, but all is lyric; we have but the prose fancies of just such a poet as we know Haynes to have been. And there you are!"

I was utterly dashed—and so acknowledged.

"Now, listen to me," he continued. "Did you give her *all* the letters?"

"I suppose I did," I responded ungraciously.

"The packet had been opened," he reminded me. "One letter or another may have gone astray. Look again among your loose papers for it. Some single inconsistency or absurdity may develop to bring this whole house of cards to the ground in a twinkling."

"I will look," I said docilely.

"Do. By saving the poor woman from making herself ridiculous you may gain her gratitude and get back the papers for your own use. They have one value, if not another."

VII

It was almost as if my friend had employed the gifts of the clairvoyant. I dredged again among the sediment of Cerini's disordered papers, and one more epistle from Haynes to Hortense Carapace came to the surface. The Count's thick fingers must have had little skill with that long-knotted ribbon and he had given escape to the most remarkable letter of them all.

Haynes wrote from his sick-bed. His wound was but a trifle, and the thought of *her* was a sufficient consolation. He himself had inflicted a severer wound upon his adversary—one, he trusted, that would soon free her from an intolerable tyranny. It was balm to him that his enemy, prostrate on the

ground before him, had summoned strength to breathe a few words of regret for his own cruel courses and of acknowledgment of his wife's noble and stainless character. More to the same tenor followed; what could it mean save that Carapace and Haynes had fought a duel?

Had they? Melton's doubts were infecting me, and I felt disinclined to accept any statement without corroborative evidence. I resolved to distil, if possible, one last drop of the *vraie vérité* from my reluctant friend, Sophronia Wells.

As I drew near her door that afternoon, I recalled that it was a Tuesday—her day for the drive in the Cascine. Noticing, too, that a carriage was just leaving the farther end of the short street, I felt half inclined to turn back, but some obscure impulse prompted me to take the old lady's stair. I found her at home. In the dim light her face was ashen-gray, and she moved as if borne down by a burden heavier than one might long endure. It was easy to foresee that she would be at home on the next Tuesday, and on the Tuesday to follow; and I fancied that on the Tuesday next succeeding Lady Carapace's carriage might fail to appear at all—or appear still in vain.

I broached the duel. She evaded the subject feebly. These old matters were long forgotten, she said—or should be. She cowered visibly. It was as

if she had dreaded for years that Hortense Carapace would finally rise and snatch her life away.

"Forgotten!" I echoed. "Believe me, they are much too important to be forgotten." I persisted in my inquiry: had any such duel taken place?

"There was no duel with Carapace, so far as I have heard," she replied reluctantly. Edgar, indeed, had protested to Carapace, and Carapace's retort constituted an insult that called for a challenge. But Carapace was twelve or thirteen years the senior and affected to look upon Haynes as a meddlesome boy. He also regarded our War as an inexpert tussle between two armed mobs, and Haynes, though a soldier in it, as but a bungling amateur. He coolly asked the youth's friends to take him out of the way. "It was summary, and it was ignominious," said Sophronia Wells, with a thrill of indignation still; "but it may have saved a life." She folded her hands and lowered her eyes in deep dejection to the floor. "Edgar's duel came later—with Camillo Aradolfi," she added, beneath her breath.

With Camillo Aradolfi, the husband of the half-mythical Francesca! More and more was I coming to feel that the story of Donna Francesca was the real story, after all.

"Aradolfi was younger than Lord Carapace?" I ventured.

"Yes; he and Edgar were of an age—twenty-three or four."

"How did the encounter result?"

"Aradolfi was slightly wounded. Little was thought of it, but he died within a year."

"And what was the——? Why did they——?"

But Sophronia Wells set her thin lips together, and I saw that the last drop had been expressed.

I had no desire to withhold from Melton such recognition of his powers of intuition as was justly due, and with little delay I placed the last-found "letter" in his hands. I gave him, at the same time, my own idea of its value. "Take it to Lady Carapace," I said, "and see what you can do."

"*I* take it?" he objected. "Why, I hardly know her at all. Take it yourself."

"*I* take it?" I repeated. "No, indeed; I know her only too well."

"Let me have it, then," he said. "I'll try. You've made a copy of it, I hope?"

His report, when it came, fairly astonished me.

Lady Carapace, notwithstanding the slightness of their acquaintance, had received him in her study. She had undergone transfiguration. She was no longer the *grande dame;* she was the pythoness, the sibyl. *In fretta e in furia* she was working at her "Memoirs."

"I found her in a soaring ecstasy," said Melton. "Nothing I said could bring her down. I told her bluntly that the whole series of letters was a fabrication, and showed her why. Do you think that affected her? Not a particle. She read the latest letter through—twice. Her eyes filled with tears—but they were tears of triumph. Her bosom heaved with sobs—but they were sobs of pride. In her transport she murmured some broken words about the 'generous delirium of the sick-room'—she put him to bed in no time! Quite as quickly she incorporated that letter into her scheme. And if she doesn't promptly transform 'delirium' into something much more normal and flattering, I greatly err."

"Good heavens!" I gasped.

"I did all I could to tame her boundless egoism; but between her native disposition and her acquired title she will find full sanction for anything she may choose to do. She is doubly an aristocrat—by nature and by label—and she will back herself to the utmost. I tried delicately to ask consideration for that poor, stricken Miss Wells, but she utterly brushed her aside. Then I was brutal enough to bring in that fat old creature at Pistoja, but her she brusquely ignored. . . ."

"One other remains," I said: "Francesca Aradolfi. Her story, I am convinced, is the real story, after all."

"Then Lady Carapace may learn it yet. Who do you think was sitting in her *sala* as I left her study?"

"Who?"

"Count Cerini. All that we have been hearing is quite true. He calls there two or three times a week. She pushes him in society. She distinguishes him—she had him in her box at the Pergola the other evening and wore her tiara for him. If he paid so much for your help, think how much more he must pay for hers. She will know."

"Is she leading him on? Does he presume to hope?"

"Nonsense! He is forty-five and she is almost sixty. And he is far too 'dour'—like Carapace himself. But she will know."

"How much does he himself 'know'?"

"Little, perhaps—as yet. For, on my way out, I paused to thank him on your account, and he——"

"I had written."

"I understand. But he didn't resent a further acknowledgment. He replied gruffly that he was glad to find his efforts appreciated. He had no taste, he said, for looking into old papers in any language; merely to examine such as obviously concerned his own family had been a much greater task than he could have anticipated."

"But, dear me!" I cried; "how much *has* he held back?"

"Never fear," replied Melton. "His 'task' involved, I venture to say, not only the maximum of effort, but also the minimum of illumination. Yet she will know."

"The knowledge, when it comes, may prove a shock."

"Don't believe it. So long as the sacred fury is upon her, she will be able to transmute the basest metal into gold. But Donna Francesca—poor shade! —may well await her hour in fear and trembling; comparisons, when they come, will be odious enough, no doubt. As for you," concluded Melton, "you will profit by all this, in the end."

"I trust so," I said. "Well, give me back the letter."

His face fell. "She kept it," he stammered.

VIII

It was a brilliant afternoon in early December. Crowds were pouring into the Cascine through the stately Viale del Re, on wheels and on foot, and among the pedestrians were Melton and myself. I was taking a holiday after weeks of close and conscientious study, and he was enjoying a final look at

Florence before returning to his own concerns at Pisa.

Those weeks of study had not been passed wholly in Florence; they had involved more than one visit to Lucca. While Lady Carapace was shut up in her study, I was besieging Palazzo Aradolfi. I presented myself to its guileless major-domo as an impassioned tourist, bent upon the pursuit of the typical, the authentic, the choice, the unhackneyed. It was my ignominious rôle to catch at each flying thread of old gossip—or worse—that might develop within the house itself or in the town at large. But why dwell upon back-stair tittle-tattle or rehearse the chatter of fading elders who should have been more charitable and more discreet? I shall claim to have come upon nothing more substantial and illuminative than the portraits of Don Camillo and Donna Francesca in the great hall of Palazzo Aradolfi itself. The tongue of reminiscence had made the husband jealous and arrogant; the wife, frivolous and imprudent. Arrogance indeed was present and to spare in the young man's face and poise; but still more striking was the *nettete* that made him a cameo of the finest Italic type. And I felt him to have been not more clean-cut in feature than in mind. Here was no dallier with uncertainties, no devotee of the dusky, the indefinite, the equivocal; all bespoke a nature

that nothing could satisfy save the sharpest outline shown in the clearest light. Just as plainly was frivolity present in the young wife—or, rather, in her costume, which reeked with the Parisian meretriciousness of the Second Empire. Yet she must have been more than a mere Tuscan Frou-Frou. Her great, dark passionate eyes, her full, red lips, the proud and wilful pose of her head—surely all these announced her as a serious charge for an overexigent husband. Trouble, foreordained, had simply waited on the appearance of the *tertium quid*.

"Why, Melton," I declared, as we moved along the Viale together, "the whole affair may be almost divined!"

As we made our way farther into those bosky depths, and were nearing the open space of the wide Piazzale, a wave of sensation passed over the crowded roadway and the thronging foot-paths. People in landaus and victorias smiled and gave greeting; people on foot strained and elbowed and murmured and pointed. A carriage came sweeping by; it was the landau of Lady Carapace.

First among the four occupants was Lady Carapace herself, rich in costume and triumphant of mien, attended by the *dame de compagnie* who, since Sophronia Wells's lapse into hopeless invalidism, had come to be more than ever her chief reliance. The

third of the party was Count Cerini. The stamp of urbane Florence was markedly upon him, and he was enjoying his present conspicuousness with all the powers of his dogged soul. "He hasn't told yet," murmured Melton. "Those old records are still dumb."

The fourth occupant of the carriage was an elderly gentleman of dignified and kindly aspect. He and Lady Carapace seemed to be absorbed in the deepest and most intimate converse. "Who is he?" I asked.

Melton gave a wry smile and shrugged his shoulders.

Lady Carapace had triumphed indeed. Her "Memoirs," written at white heat and pushed through the press with all possible speed, had taken the town by storm. For a week or more they had been filling the windows of the book-sellers and all the world was reading them. She had also caused the poems of Edgar Haynes to be reprinted, and the two books were selling side by side. She had made a decent pretence of prelude with her girlhood in Virginia and at Washington, and she had constructed a seemly epilogue out of her later years in Florence; but the real pivot of the book—the nub, the *clou*—was, of course, the episode of Edgar Haynes, and copious extracts from my ravished letters gave this

section of her work all of its substance and piquancy. She had wisely made her primary appeal to the Italians, a people ever ready to give cordial reception to any disclosure of romantic passion; but the entire Anglo-Saxon colony had been drawn into the movement, and already ears were straining for return-echoes from London and New York. Yes, native and stranger were sweeping along side by side, and native and stranger alike acclaimed her in public to-day. No time, this, for thinking of Sophronia Wells; no time for seeing her, feebly propped on her window-sill, striving for a distant, oblique view of the glad procession parkward; no time for hearing her moan, again and again, from the depths of her pillowed chair: "She had forgotten him, until I brought him back to her!" The day was Lady Carapace's own.

"Who is the fine old personage chained to her chariot-wheels?" I insisted. "Tell me. I'm sure you know."

"That, my dear Van Cott," Meltón replied, "is the Duke of Belcuore, Syndic of Florence."

"Well, well," I exclaimed, "Cerini must yield now!"

"It isn't the Count who must yield," he returned; "it's the Syndic. Remember that for the past month Lady Carapace has been moving heaven and earth to have Edgar Haynes's house marked with a memorial

tablet. To-day she gets it. It is here and now that the Duke succumbs."

"I see it in place," I declared: "'IN QUESTA CASA VISSE E SCRISSE IL GENTILISSIMO POETA AMERICANO, GIOVANNI EDGARDO HAYNES.' And then, down at the bottom, the line about '*Firenze Riconoscente*,'" I added. "All in during marble, to last a thousand years. O Melton, Melton," I broke out, "you have advised me but ill!"

"How, ill?" he demanded. "Can anything do except the exact truth?"

"What is that tablet but the truth?"

"But how much truth, how much reality, is there in her book? When she hurried to Leghorn, then, it was to find Carapace dying not after a water-front brawl but after a duel with Haynes, eh?—with Haynes, chivalrously abandoned to sympathy for a compatriot married to an alien and martyred abroad, and to further sympathy still for a fellow-adherent of a lost but venerated Cause——"

"Such motives seem just enough," I declared.

"And Carapace panted out with his dying breath, did he, remorse for his harsh treatment of his wife and full pardon for her gallant young defender? And as for Haynes's own end, in the same town, we do not find him dying—as he did—from a knife-thrust at the hands of a jealous——"

FOR THE FAITH

FOR THE FAITH

I

S. S. Gigantic, *June* 27.

My dearest Ella: We land at Southampton to-morrow and already my "budget" is giving me cause for thought. While, on the one hand, I have saved several valuable days out of a short vacation and have paid no more for a poor berth on a quick boat than I should have had to pay for a good berth on a slow boat, yet, on the other hand, the question of incidentals, and more especially of fees, begins to loom large. Such modest disbursements as I made four years ago seem quite out of date to-day; more, much more, would appear to be expected—may I not even say, demanded? I shall think twice before joining again in the June rush on a fashionable ship; I am altogether out of my class. I should have chosen a cheaper line, or else have put my pride in my pocket and gone second cabin. I feel sure that, in order to meet the expectations of my stewardess, I shall have to dispense with cabs during the whole of my fortnight in England.

Yes, the pace is desperate, yet almost everybody

aboard seems determined to keep up with it. You may ask by whom it is set. If I mention the name of Mrs. William Gold Starr surely I need add little more. This woman, with her daughter, occupies the principal *suite de luxe* on the promenade deck. Her pile of trunks upon the pier was simply terrifying, and her expenditures on board must be lavish to the verge of criminality. Imagine whether a modest school-teacher can compete with such a dominant figure for the attentions of the ship's servants. Whether on deck or in the saloon, all these creatures eye one with a pitying patience. "You poor young woman," they seem to be saying, "how completely you are out of place!" The table-steward seems already to have sensed the smallness of his *douceur*, and has begun to glide over me rather lightly in favor of worthier ones on the other side of the board. Dear Elizabeth—whom no one can accuse of looking for slights—feels as I do, and Candace agrees with us both.

"The old order changeth," she says, with a meek *moue*.

As for Mrs. Starr, she is "society" incarnate; no further word is needed. If you happened to hear Dr. Allen's sermon, delivered the Sunday before I left home, you have her characterized most completely. I hope his observations have reached far be-

yond the limits of Stoneham Falls; they deserve to be copied throughout the whole upper Naugatuck Valley. And it would do no harm if a good loud echo from that notable pronouncement were to reach New York itself. I won't profess to understand how the husbands of these women rake their money together, but the way the women themselves publicly throw those dollars about is extravagant and demoralizing to the last degree. With such artificial and insolent standards of value in vogue, how, I ask you, are the poor to live—and travel?

Mrs. Starr—whom I have not met, as you can readily conceive—scarcely impresses me as a woman of cultivation or of any great natural fineness. However, she appears to possess in abundance the self-confidence that boundless wealth can bestow. I have heard, vaguely, that she is seeking rest abroad after an exhausting social season; but she is the reverse of fragile, and I venture to prophesy that, once on the other side, she will plunge into things as heartily as ever she did at home. That she will endeavor to combine physical rehabilitation with psychical refreshment would be immensely too much to expect. You may trust the enormously rich to miss their best opportunities.

"Yes, indeed," says Candace.

The daughter is a presentable girl of nineteen;

she seems to have been discreetly brought up and tastefully turned out. Shall I seem too bitter if I say that, besides being well-dressed and well-mannered, she is likely to be well-manipulated? If so—though I have an idea that she counts as one rather heavy battalion in a coming social campaign of some magnitude—I am willing to add that she will probably remain decently unconscious of her mother's manœuvrings.

Another battalion—and a heavier one—is a cousin or nephew, a stalwart young blond of twenty-two. Whether Providence is on his side remains to be seen. He is one of a set, if I may so express it. There are nine or ten of them: some blond, some dark; some younger, a few slightly older; but all of them uniformly stalwart—except one little fellow who is to sit at the back and steer. They are going to row on the Thames; they will represent their university in a competition for a "cup," as it is expressed, and seem confident of success.

I confess I have always thought of the Thames in connection with Windsor and Runnimede and Stoke Poges; but this is a world of change (as Candace remarked at luncheon to-day), and possibly a set of bare-legged boys from oversea pulling through a howling, cosmopolitan mob on an English river will fit in better now than ever before. You may imagine

whether I, as an educator, can approve of such a degradation of learning as is involved in college athletics. First, a well-balanced curriculum becomes a mere appendix to a scheme of physical culture. And next, physical culture itself—if half the intelligence from the smoking-room be true—degenerates into a saturnalian rout of cigarette rolling, wine-bibbing, card-playing, and general carousing. How much better, all round, a month of mountain climbing in the Tyrol!

These boys, of course, "run" the ship; they are in evidence at all times and carry things with a high hand. A common interest in their success is assumed, and to-night's dinner is to be turned into a "banquet" in anticipation of their victory. Meanwhile Mrs. William Gold Starr is not minimizing her relationship to one of these young heroes. On the contrary, she is turning the connection to its fullest account—and nobody, I venture to say, better understands how to "set a squadron in the field." I cannot picture her as inconspicuous at Henley, the place where the race is to be rowed. She will hardly permit the aristocracy to neglect her.

"Their best people exist only for ours," says Elizabeth sweetly.

I can scarcely dwell upon this floating pilgrimage of pomp and luxury, of low ideals and foolish ambi-

tions and general wrong-headedness, without a reference to one more passenger; for the *Gigantic* carries no less a personage than Leander M. Coggswell. If, as I assume, you are a constant reader of Joel Rawson's editorials in the *Intelligencer*, you will realize that our cup is indeed full and running over —that, in addition to the presence among us of the least desirable example of the social leader, the worst type of plutocrat our country has produced is intimately manifest to us in the flesh. You may recall Joel's paragraph of last month which described Coggswell as a blend of prestidigitator and pirate—an expression that was copied as far as Waterbury and Hartford. I should think such a trenchant bit of coinage would make Wall Street wince.

Well, Leander M. Coggswell is finely housed and served, as I need not pause to say, and he draws a great deal of attention when he strolls about—which is very infrequently—on deck. Cruel and selfish and ravenous as you may call him, and insolently defiant of law and right, he is nevertheless really imposing. I don't know that I have been more impressed by a mere fellow-creature since Professor Hence spoke to us at the Lyceum on "Menaces to Our Civilization."

Mr. Coggswell—whom I have given a wide berth —is, of course, a very large man. A small one, if thin,

is insignificant; if plump, like Joel Rawson, he runs the risk of being slightly absurd—Joel is more effective, as you must acknowledge, in his editorials than in his speeches. But in bigness mere bulk may be disregarded. It is not that Leander Coggswell is large, but that he is also lean. Or shall I say, spare? Or shall I even say, gaunt? Large as he is, he seems to have reduced himself to a working minimum; with his black eyes and his yellow skin, he is like a half-famished panther. He eats next to nothing, and I hear that his digestion is all but ruined. Is this retribution? For the tale of those whom he has stripped to the bone would be a long one. Shall I mention any other name than that of Judge Amos Wright, in Stoneham Falls itself, who put the whole of that thirty-five hundred dollars into one of Coggswell's Dakota railroads and never saw a cent of it again?

However, one's physical digestion may break down, yet one's moral digestion hold out in all its original hardihood. There are men who can bolt any act of greed, of cruelty, of injustice—whether done by themselves or by others—and never feel a pang, never experience the slightest disquiet. Oh, who, with a conscience, can hope to be either happy or successful!

But a truce to these moralizings. Our magnate certainly looks older and more worn than a man of fifty-eight has any right to look; his face is sadly

drawn and he is nearly bald already. Doubtless the report that he is going abroad to avoid a nervous break-down may have some foundation in fact. He has wrecked his health, and for what? For a heap of dollars—dollars as superfluous to him as they were necessary to those he snatched them from. Many, too many, of them will be dispensed abroad, and the problem of travel-culture for persons of moderate means will become more acute than ever.

I ought to stop now and help poor Candace arrange the details of our first few days ashore. There she sits opposite me, at her Louis Quinze desk—a mate to mine—busy as a bee with our plans for Salisbury and Winchester and Wells, and blissfully forgetful of furnishings whose unchastened luxuriousness is little short of disgusting. I only hope her next winter's lectures on the "Christian Architecture of England" will be as successful as they deserve to be. But before I go to get ready for to-night's feast—oh, how maddening it is to be paying for so much more than one wants, or needs!—I might pen a few words about still another of our company.

This, as you may be prepared to hear, is a young man. He mentioned incidentally, this forenoon, in the course of a long, discursive talk over the port rail, that he was twenty-eight. If he really is two years older than I am, well and good—for I had at

once set him down as a mere skittish juvenile. No, I won't call him skittish; the epithets to describe him must be drawn from a higher vocabulary, and even from another language. Turn to the fiction shelves of your blessed library and consult the volumes you deal out so sparingly and discreetly to the fit and qualified. I mean the ones in which the hero is described, in cutting italics, as *insouciant* and *debonnaire* and *degagé*. Well, that's Egerton Thorpe. These words don't give any idea of his eyes and hair and moustache, but he is light and has a sufficiency of color. I will go no further than to say that on a six-day boat he is entertaining, and that on a ten-day boat he might be indispensable. He has a fluent and babbling irresponsibility all his own. Judge, then, of my surprise when I learned that he was a nephew of no less a person than the great Coggswell. Yet how close a relationship is that? And how many nephews are like their uncles?

Well, this young Mr. Thorpe saw fit to compliment me on my looks. Philippa has some color of her own, as you know, and it doesn't flee away before the sea winds; neither do her loose locks lie flatter than another girl's. So he may have been excusable, and certainly he was as deft about it as you please. All the same, I chose to find him a shade forth-putting, and I gave him to understand that I had been praised

before for my looks and had lived through it. He also had a discerning word of approval for my cloak, and that I didn't resent. If you think it would please Aunt Hattie, tell her—though I doubt whether a token of appreciation from any mere man would much affect that stern artist. All the same, I pooh-poohed the cloak; I was in my business clothes, I said.

"And what is your business, if I may ask?"

"My business," I replied, "is to make the best of myself—and of a few dozen other people."

"You have certainly succeeded with yourself to admiration," he returned—and I won't say that he seemed either bold or patronizing. "But the others—some of them must present pretty knotty problems. Style and good looks are not at all common, unfortunately."

"I am not concerned about their style and their looks," I retorted. "I'm after their minds and their moral natures."

He hesitated and gave his little moustache a twist or two. "Then you are not a——?"

"No," I declared, "I am not a dress-maker going to Paris to bring back the fall models. I'm the instructor in history and literature at the academy in Stoneham Falls, Connecticut. What are you?"

He hesitated again—as if, after *that*, he needed to

rally and reorganize his forces. In a moment or two:

"I'm a trained nurse," he said lightly. "But a great dress-maker clears her tens of thousands a year."

"Huh!" I answered; "you won't be able to make mere money talk with *me!* So your uncle," I went on, "is really quite ill, then?"

"Yes. The doctors finally united and pushed him off from dry land."

"I dare say he has done well to heed them."

"It would take more than a few doctors to frighten Uncle Leander. There was a month or two he found he could spare, and he came. He will find plenty to do."

"And you came along to help him in his business? When you call yourself a 'trained nurse' you mean you are his private secretary or his confidential——"

Egerton Thorpe laughed. "If I had been of any great use in his 'business' I should have been left on shore. However, I know a few things better than he does. I shop for him."

"Do you spend a great deal of money?" I asked boldly. "I presume you have plenty *to* spend."

"Money, yes. But not money alone, young lady. Gumption; taste. No one has the monopoly of that, you know," he said, looking again at my cloak.

"I've heard something about those doings," I declared. "So it's you who are largely to blame? Why can't you leave all those old things where they belong, among the people who created them? Such men as you and your uncle are brigands, plunderers, butchers—just another Black Band. What is the snatching away of works of art compared with the having created them in the first place?"

"The next best thing," he rejoined—not, as I am bound to admit, ungently. "We can't have artists to order, you know."

"I'm glad you realize that," I retorted. "But some of the money spent in ravaging Europe might be spent in training a line of art-workers at home. That would spare the Old World and beautify the New."

Well, dear Ella, I won't go on. You get a fair idea of the kind of people I have been condemned to spend a week among. I have touched on only a few, but there are dozens more. No faith, no convictions, no adequate ideals, no belief in anything beyond the brute power of money. Are we rotten before we are ripe? Must the best among us despair of the republic? My spirits are low to-day; I trust they may rise upon land.

Show mother anything in this that you think might interest her. I hope the trustees will relent and

give you that Cyclopædia, after all. Elizabeth begins her black-letter work at the British Museum within a week. Best love to all.

Your true friend,

PHILIPPA J. HODGES.

II

VENICE, *July* 30.

DEAR ELLA: I'm sure I intended writing you again long before this, but you will understand that every hour has had its tasks and has been crowded to the utmost. Since we have decided, however, to give Venice three whole days, I am glad to take up my pen in your behalf.

Every moment here is packed with interest and beauty; this afternoon, for example, we had a regatta almost beneath our very windows. I thought the occasion extremely picturesque, but two or three young Englishmen were most disparaging—neither the "form" nor the "time" at all impressed them. And truly, it was all far below the standards set up at Henley.

Henley, fatal name! You doubtless read the newspaper accounts of our mortifying collapse on that celebrated course. To have three men keel over in the boat within fifty yards of the goal was painful, indeed—unless one saw, as I did, Nemesis manifestly

at work. We conceived the thing in the wrong spirit and went at it in the wrong fashion. For our men the race was an end in itself; for their opponents it was but the ordered conclusion of a year of normal athletic life. We stood high, for a moment, by straining on tiptoe; but the man who stands high when simply planted on his heels is the man who lasts—and counts. Young Bassett is spending his summer in the Tyrol, after all. He was the first of our crew to give way as the result of our presumptuous and vainglorious endeavor. He was in a dreadful state for a fortnight, and may thank his lucky stars if he comes to be his earlier self before autumn.

His aunt, or grandaunt—I don't know just what the relationship is—was as conspicuous there, in her own way, as he in his. She had a house-boat, a showy and flaunting affair, which we saw from the opposite side of the river. Such things are immensely expensive—only the very wealthy or the very ambitious (or both) attempt them. Our one day on the Thames, simple as were our arrangements, cost us cruelly, and all we had was the most modest lodging a mile from the course.

I was told that Mrs. Starr entertained several male members of the aristocracy and that her daughter received a vast deal of very marked attention. I gathered that the procedure, the etiquette, of house-

boat life was quite elaborate and exacting, and that to entertain the British peerage successfully upon its native heath was something of an achievement—that even the attempt was evidence of a gallant spirit. Of course, I can't say how well Mrs. William Gold Starr succeeded. I hope she did better in her boat than young Bassett did in his.

Leander M. Coggswell was also on the course at Henley—as a member of Mrs. Starr's party. In fact, as I have recently discovered—though it's rather late in the day to make the statement—they are related; half brother and sister, or something like that. And here Elizabeth asks:

"What sort of a reporter would *you* make—coming in with the facts a month behind?"

But Elizabeth may go on with her biography of Giorgione. It is plain, now, why they all sat together in the saloon—though I supposed, then, that it was the result of the captain's desire to mass all his wealth and social prestige at one table. And we may easily imagine Coggswell at Mrs. Starr's own table in the small saloon of the *Water-lily*—a triton among the minnows, a plutocratic magnate among the impecunious incapables of Burke's big red-and-gold book! Fancy him, as I did, giving "tips," as they are called, to the avid aristocrats crowded around him, just as you feed crumbs to your goldfish.

You catch, now, the general outline of Mrs. Starr's social campaign in England. Do those people love sport? Then she pushes forward her nephew. Do they admire beauty and esteem dollars? Then she advances Miss Gladys a square or two. Do they crave hints from the lips of a crafty and energetic plutocrat? Then the black knight of "high finance" is made to take his zigzag course across the board. Oh, what sordid hopes, what mean ambitions, what grovelling ideals crowd the whole ignoble game! Could such things satisfy you or me as an aim in life? But let me drop all these degrading and debilitating considerations and pitch upon something with a tone more tonic.

While Elizabeth was enjoying her precious Early English fortnight at the British, Candace and I did the universities and several of the cathedral towns. Winchester, to which we were able to give four whole hours, was wonderfully satisfying. To me, the most striking things about the cathedral were the chantries, Bishop Gardiner's among them. A grisly old prelate, that; but he had convictions and lived up to them. At Oxford, where we thought it really necessary to remain overnight, we made a special point of the Martyrs' Memorial. Poor Ridley and the rest! They, too, had convictions and suffered for them. Upon returning to London we visited Smithfield. It is now

brutally modern and prosaic, but we prized the opportunity of standing on the spot where other martyrs were glad to die for the faith that was in them.

As for France, I pass over Paris; but be sure we visited Amiens and Rheims. It was all the age of faith incarnate, when men alike built and battled on conviction; yes, and women too. For at Rheims I thought less of soaring vaults and pinnacles than of poor Joan of Arc placing the crown on the head of that none too worthy king.

When in Provence it was hard to keep from casting an eye on Languedoc and giving a thought to the Albigenses. I have always had an immense sympathy for those light-hearted heretics; but I have also felt no less an interest in Pope Innocent, who was prepared to uphold the purity of belief, as he understood it, by any means whatsoever. Is it Gibbon who says somewhere that there are epochs when the settlement of a point of doctrine seems of more importance than the depopulation of a province? Perhaps you can find the passage in one of those five volumes—so seldom disturbed!—behind the Franklin stove. If the remark, however, refers to an earlier age don't accuse me of misquoting. But whether quoting or misquoting, I place Innocent the Third among the figures of my Pantheon; and if I have time at Rome,

I shall run up to Segni and try to find the palace where that masterful soul was reared.

And now about Italy, the thrice-blessed. O Ella, how can I begin? And if I begin, how can I ever end? Let me but say that my earliest expectations are already more than realized. These first arose, if you will know, in London—yes, as early as that—in the Quattrocento room of the National Gallery: Lippi, Bellini, Angelico, and dozens more, illustrious or obscure, that I will not pause to mention. Oh, those honest, sober, faithful creatures! No falsity, no frivolity, but such a complete dedication to deep and direct earnestness. They believed, if ever men did, in the seriousness and sanctity of the work they were called upon to do. Quaintness, oddity, naïveté, awkwardness, if you like, but an endless depth of faith, of conviction. And what I found in the London gallery I have been finding, for the past week, here. Milan, Bergamo, Verona, Padua—they all tell the same tale of firm and triumphant belief. Can *we* believe? Can our lips frame a creed, or our forces act upon it? We falter; we hesitate. The more science tells us, the more our hearts fail within us.

But I am taking a heavy and emphatic tone for one who has just returned from a lightsome evening in the Piazza. There was moonshine and music and

a great throng, native and foreign, and a gentleman came along and offered me an ice. Have I mentioned a Mr. Thorpe—Egerton Thorpe? Well, it was Mr. Thorpe who offered me the ice. He dropped down in Venice only yesterday from Cortina, in the Dolomites. The rest of his party, all and several, especially young George Bassett, are in the Salzkammergut, recovering from their English campaign and hobnobbing, doubtless, with the Important Ones at Ischl. Mr. Thorpe said he had come to Venice for "a day's shopping." That means, I soon discovered, a week's search for carved and coffered ceilings. His uncle's predatory habits cannot be quieted down. Are we in the midst of another Renaissance, with the despot and the art patron once more in intimate fusion?

My young man mentioned Henley, and said that he had seen our little party in the crowd. He had tried to overtake us, but had failed. He was sorry no occasion had arisen that made it possible for me to meet the ladies of his party—implying, rather remotely, that it was a delicate task for a man to promote acquaintance between women.

"Yes," I retorted, "there is always the risk of confronting a great lady with her dress-maker."

He laughed lightly and easily, and I was glad enough to have it that way. Then he went on and

gave us the details of his campaign against the doomed Venetian palaces.

"How much longer is this shameful pillage going to last?" I demanded, "I would almost rather that you employed such rapacity in 'business.'"

Candace was aghast, but I signified to her to go on with her ice.

"You are hard on business," he replied. "But business, according to the most recent authorities, is war. Pillage is involved in both."

"War, eh? Is it, indeed? Then it would be better if several millions of our simple-minded Americans came to understand it so. Some of the softer-hearted among us—'recent authorities' in their own feeble way—think that business might be, not war, but co-operation, even coördination."

"Not yet; not for a long time," he submitted.

"You are posted, then? You are an 'authority' yourself?"

"Well, I know about how things run. I have had some fair chances to learn."

"And I suppose that, pretty soon, you will be putting your knowledge into practice?"

"Pretty soon, if ever. My uncle tells me I am close to the last call."

"Which means that he will presently take you in hand and re-create you in his own image?"

"Possibly so, and possibly not. Nobody has found me too tractable yet."

I told him that I didn't find him very wild, and said that perhaps somebody would take him in hand some time and tame him without much trouble. Candace clattered her spoon in her empty dish, and I let her clatter.

I was willing enough to hear something about his aunt and cousin—I render these relationships but approximately—and I treated Candace by silent suggestion so successfully that she fell low enough to make one or two inquiries. Yes, the ladies were now resting in Austria from their previous rest in England. Mrs. Starr was cultivating Serene Transparencies, and Miss Gladys was tolerating the various mountain spas by reason of hopes held out that more brilliant scenes might presently dawn in Italy.

"Of course it all depends on poor Geordie," said Egerton Thorpe. "He isn't coming on any too fast. Neither, for that matter, is my uncle. We are getting to be concerned about him."

"I hope he eats more on shore than he ate on the steamer," I observed. "I never saw a big man eat so little."

"He is eating very little still. What he does is to drink. I never knew there were so many doctors, or so many kinds of water. They hurry him from place

to place, from spring to spring, and the faster he travels the yellower he gets. He ought to have let go a little sooner. But it's always one deal more. This last one was too big and too hard."

"I read about it," I said. "It was also too outrageous." This was the affair, Ella, that kept Joel Rawson frantic for a week. "Why, he took that Kansas railroad away from the other man by main force. He didn't even have a majority of the stock!"

"What are stockholders? He got a majority of the directors. Business is war."

"You still stick to it, do you? But when you come to it, what are directors?"

"You have the right idea," he acquiesced jovially. "It's always the one man in the end."

Did you ever hear of more atrocious doctrine for a republic? And then to praise my "idea," and thus make me almost an accomplice! I could have taken that young man by both shoulders—right before the crowd—and given him a good shaking.

But what I really did do was something quite different. He asked me to go with him to-morrow to see one or two of his palaces, and I have promised to. Dearest Ella, do not condemn me, do not despise me. . . .

Yours ever,

PHILIPPA J. HODGES.

III

PISA, *August* 19.

DEAR ELLA: I am not going to tell you about the Leaning Tower; no, nor about all the other wonders and rarities I have seen during the past three weeks. Rome, Florence, Orvieto, Spoleto, Assisi, Arezzo, Perugia—you shall cull my impressions of these various places from my diary after my return home. I have kept it most faithfully; no evening, however tired I may have been, has passed without its page. Also, my monograph on the Guelphs and Ghibellines—in which your devoted Philippa tries to reduce an utter jungle to something remotely resembling order—is pretty well sketched out. I am not sparing myself, as you may judge.

Elizabeth, who is less robust and seasoned, gave way a little at Assisi and spent the day in bed. Candace was quite willing to stay by her, so I was able to visit the church there a second time, and even to double back to Spello for the Pinturicchios in the cathedral.

We have decided to give a whole week to the towns of northern Tuscany. We shall take them rather slowly and easily—not more than one a day. If my first impressions of Italian painting—received in London, as you recall—were confirmed in Lom-

bardy and Venice, think how much more completely they have been strengthened in Umbria and Val d'Arno. Such faith, such humility, such firm devotion to the truth as they saw it!

The other day a mysterious invitation came to me to attend an entertainment given by the American consul in his villa at the Bagni di Lucca. As we were then at Lucca itself, I decided to go. If it had been a summons to a reception at the embassy in Rome I should have had to think twice; but even a girl who carries all her clothes in two portmanteaus need not fear an informal little garden-party in the provinces. The summer colony all turned out—Americans, English, Italians—and really your Philippa looked about as well as any of them.

You will be surprised, as I was, to find that our steamer friends, the Starrs and the Coggswells, were present. I had no idea they would show themselves so patriotic; for too many people of wealth and social prominence affect to ignore our representatives abroad—at least anybody below an ambassador. Both Mrs. Starr and Mr. Coggswell were very much stared at, and very much courted; but I will do them the justice to say that they did not make themselves too large for the occasion. The great Leander developed a faculty for meeting other people on terms of apparent equality; and his sister,

whom I met briefly, really betrayed traces of a latent motherliness that life in a different sphere would doubtless have brought to a fuller development. She has rather pleasant eyes when one gets close to her. She remembered seeing me on the steamer, and appeared to be interested in a plan of tour so wholly unlike her own. "Our own plans," she sighed, "have been upset completely."

The girl Gladys was very beautifully turned out, but had a strained and apprehensive look that compared none too favorably with the repose and self-containment of several English girls who were present. The boy "Geordie" was on hand, too; he has had his ups and downs, and, on the whole, has bettered but little. These young people, never having seen Italy, and having tired of the Alps, had insisted upon descending to Maggiore, and had then in due course moved on to Tuscany. It is a lively fortnight at Florence, I gather, that has put young Bassett back, and they are now talking of sea air for him—at Viareggio, possibly. For Mr. Coggswell himself, now yellower than ever, Montecatini is proposed, though he is very impatient, they say, to get back to London. He has the purchase of a steamship line on his mind. Think of that—in his condition!

Miss Gladys was very much admired, especially by the Anglophile Italians, of whom there were

several at Mr. and Mrs. McKeever's party. One in particular, the Marchese Sansalvo, made it impossible that he should be overlooked, either by Miss Starr or by anybody else. He was a handsome, robust man of thirty-three or so, and very ingratiating and assiduous. Your Philippa never claimed to be a person of great social experience, but she set Master Federigo down as an expert. Mind, I do not say, a specialist; for few of the Italians really seem to "jell." I mean to say merely that our noble appeared to be very practised and efficient in his own environment—an environment in which cosmopolitan garden-parties are an important element—and might be counted upon to hold his own in his native Italy, however compromised and corrupted that Italy may have come to be. Doubtless he would be ground exceeding small if unfortunate enough to be caught in the mills of the gods now dominant throughout America. His title is genuine, Mrs. McKeever assured me; what is more, his family have a page in the *Almanach de Gotha*. Mrs. Starr's face and manner never beclouded *that* fact for an instant.

And so the marriage mart goes on! Isn't it deplorable? Isn't it disgraceful?

Of course there was a good deal of whispered gossip in circulation about the Starrs. One reason why they left the Tyrol was, it seems, a young

Austrian baron. He was very impetuous, and, as he possessed some independent means, vastly self-important. I gather that he became a trifle obstreperous and that Mrs. Starr found it advisable to carry her daughter off. I don't know whether or not he is expected to follow.

O Ella, isn't it depressing! Isn't it ignoble!

Mr. Egerton Thorpe was also at the garden-party —perhaps I have mentioned him in previous letters. He has dropped carved ceilings and has taken up terra-cottas. These artistic activities are still in behalf of his uncle; the nephew has turned himself into a sieve and is *screening* Tuscany for Della Robbias. I met him early in the week at Pistoja, where he was hunting down *bimbi* and the like, just as a dog scents out truffles; and I encountered him again here, only this forenoon, in the Campo Santo.

"How long are you going to stay?" I asked him.

"As long as you do," he replied.

"And I am going to stay as long as *you* do," I returned. "Orcagna and Gozzoli are not to be ripped from these walls if I can help it. Neither is this blessed old place going to be transported bodily to Long Island."

He laughed. "I assure you my uncle doesn't like Orcagna at all and hasn't any particular fondness even for Benozzo Gozzoli. They are perfectly safe

here. So are the cloisters. So are the monuments. So are the cypresses."

"I see," said I. "Orcagna—or whoever did those great things—is too severe, too given to the stern realities. And Gozzoli is too *intime* and *naïf*. You must have pomp and splendor——"

"Such as Della Robbias give?"

"Oh, leave those poor things alone! Let the land that originated them keep them a little longer. They were born here, and they belong here. Restrain yourself. I'd much rather you went back to America and learned to rob your fellow-citizens."

He laughed again—sometimes the very bluntness of the truth takes from it all its effect and makes offence impossible. "Come, a man with the weight of half the world on his shoulders must have his diversions and distractions," he said.

"There are other diversions besides out-and-out robbery," I returned.

"Yes; there are—garden-parties; but they don't go far. All the same, I was glad to see you at that one."

"It was a pleasant break in the routine work of my trip," I acknowledged. "And it was interesting to meet—finally—the ladies of your party. Mrs. Starr was quite civil."

"She didn't mistake you for a dress-maker,

either, did she? Well, there wasn't the slightest danger."

"I looked as dowdy as that, then?" I asked sharply. "My father was a poor country doctor, and I'm travelling with all my things in two portmanteaus; but he managed to do some good in his day and generation, and I myself——"

"Come," he said quickly, "no more of that. You looked better than anybody else there"—privately, I think I did—"and you've got about four times too much spunk. Do you want to drive me out of town?"

Well, when the thing was put as plumply as that to me, I didn't. So, after we had left the Campo Santo, I let him accompany me through a few of those quiet streets (keeping on the shady side, for the day has been most oppressive), and along some of the cooler reaches (though they were all warm enough) of the Lungarno. How delightful this town must be in May or in October! But a poor schoolteacher cannot choose; she must take the exhausting mid-summer as it comes.

We saw several churches here and there (they, at least, were cool), and indulged in a good deal of gossip which, I fear, contributed little of value to the cause of culture. Mr. Thorpe told me about the Viennese baron, a fiery young particle who had

rather presumed on his rank and his independent fortune; and he referred once or twice to the marchese. Sansalvo, it seems, was educated at Oxford, and is thought to be a rather good fellow. But I believe the girl would do better to marry some bright young business man at home. If unhappiness comes she will have that mistakenly ambitious mother to blame.

We sail on the 10th of next month, and I shall be back among you at the Falls on the 20th. This will be two or three days after the opening of the academy; but the board (some of whom have been abroad) will understand what the fall rush is and will be indulgent. The coming three weeks we shall give to Bavaria, Switzerland, the Rhine, and the Low Countries. I especially wish to see Cologne and Antwerp. The weather will become cooler as we go north, for one thing; the last month, unusually warm, has been trying for all three of us.

No more this evening; my diary still waits. Joel Rawson, in his last, asks if the tyranny of Privilege —with a large P—is any more oppressive in the Old World than it has become in the New. What a question for mid-August! I will discuss it with him on my return. Good-night.

Yours affectionately,

PHILIPPA.

IV

VILLA DEI PLATANI, SAN REMO, *October* 13.

YOUR last letter, my dear Ella, is utterly ridiculous. There is no cause for your becoming hysterical. There is no reason for your going off in a panic. If my own mother can take things calmly and sensibly, why can't you?

I am not at death's door. Never mind what Candace and Elizabeth tell you. I am much better than when they left for home. Dr. Rubino, who is quite a pleasant old fellow when you get accustomed to him, has been letting me sit up for a week, and for the last few days he has allowed me to read and write a little. I am getting along perfectly well. All I need, he says, is rest and good air and cheerful company. The rest and the air I am getting in abundance. As for the company—and its cheerfulness—you shall hear.

Briefly, almost everybody in the house is on the shelf. Mr. Coggswell gained nothing at Montecatini, nor did George Bassett especially pick up at Viareggio. Besides, neither place was very attractive to people who have been almost everywhere and who have always commanded the best. There was talk of Nice and of Cannes; but either of these, in our

present state, would have been quite as far the other way, and they compromised by taking a villa for a few months here.

Mrs. Starr has been most kind to me, despite very exigent concerns of her own; the motherliness I detected at the Bagni is even more abundant than I guessed. She is treating me like a real daughter, and yet her own daughter and that daughter's future have become a very grave problem on her hands. My peculiar position in the household must make comment cautious, but I may venture a few words for your eye alone.

Federigo Sansalvo has looked in on us once or twice; he is an important factor in the problem. That the villa is little better than a sanatorium does not seem to intimidate him in the least He grows on one, though he is a good deal of a puzzle. Are the Italians complex, or are they simple? Are they sophisticated, or are they naïf? I give it up. And to complicate matters still further, a very nice English boy has dropped down upon us from the Alps of Dauphiny, where he has been at his autumn mountaineering. He is another factor.

He was one of the crew at Henley—that is, he was a substitute member; he would have rowed if any of his side had fallen out during training—only none of them did! He, too, has intentions of the most

obvious nature, and if Mrs. Starr is deeply concerned, poor Gladys herself has been brought by internal debate to the verge of nervous collapse. Young Willoughby is only twenty-two, and is in every way delightfully suitable except that, being a convinced Briton, he would budge little or less for an American wife, and that he has no title. His family is immensely old—so old, in fact, that a title has been more than once refused, as likely to add nothing to its lustre. That, of course, is all very well for those who know; but how many *do* know? How is the world in general going to apprehend your choiceness unless you are ticketed for its eye?

That is where Sansalvo has the advantage; I have already spoken of his page in the *Almanach*. And he has a further advantage in his age; a man of thirty-three or thereabouts seems able to exercise a peculiar fascination over a girl of nineteen. Compared with him, Willoughby is only a boy—sound and handsome and promising, but a boy all the same. The poor girl has almost succumbed in the struggle. She frankly gave up and went to bed yesterday afternoon, and patient Rubino (in the absence of the American and English doctors, who are only beginning to return) has one more problem on his very busy hands.

George Bassett is strengthening slowly after his

unfortunate overestimate of his powers; and Mr. Coggswell (who recently overestimated *his* in a personal chase Volterra-ward on the track of Luca della Robbia) is gradually recovering, and is able to eat a few simple things very carefully. But neither is markedly cheerful, and, in fact, the only capable and inspiriting person about the place—except the youngest footman—is John Egerton Thorpe.

Mr. Thorpe is very cheery and resourceful and is doing all he can to transform our hall of gloom into a house of mirth. I have learned that it was to him I stood indebted for my invitation to the garden-party at the Bagni. That, however, is a very slight obligation indeed if, as I am coming more and more to surmise, it is also to him that I am indebted for the shelter and comfort of this villa. Mrs. Starr, true, is very kindly; but could she be, I ask myself, an out-and-out angel on her own account?

This morning I was taking an hour upon the terrace, and pretty soon John Thorpe came lounging along to the chair where they had propped me up for the pleasant autumn sun and the reviving breeze from the sea. He looked me over in a slow, leisurely way—it almost amounted to an inspection. I stood it, assuming that he had earned the right.

"Well, well," he said presently; "to think that you

should have fallen by the wayside, too! How do you explain it? Why did it happen?"

"I suppose I must have overestimated my powers, as others have done. *I'm* not cast-iron, either."

"But what were you really trying to do?"

"I presume I was trying to help America become the greatest ever. We need culture, and I was doing my best to cultivate myself, and to aid those who depend on me for instruction and guidance."

He gave me another long look and twisted his lips in a whimsical smile.

"Do you imagine you are the only one who is trying to make America the greatest ever? Others may be busy in the vast work, too, with as full a faith that it can be done, and as full a determination that it shall be done. Others are suffering in the cause; you are not the only martyr."

Well, Ella, I lay there and let him talk to me. He made out a pretty good case for the various people that I may have seemed to disparage so busily through this summer's correspondence, and I was perfectly willing to let him have his say. I was made to see that the culture I had pursued to my own undoing was but one element of many in a nation's greatness, and that other elements must not be overlooked.

I was told—by a man who appeared to believe

what he was saying—that commercial dominance is one of these, and social splendor and distinction another, and the development of a high and noble spirit by means of youthful emulation a third; and that all these various objects, and others, might be followed up with as full a faith and as strong a conviction as any pursuits of my own. I was asked to perceive that a sort of financial centralization is necessary if we are to rule the world, and a higher degree of social finish and elegance if we are to assimilate ourselves satisfactorily to older societies; and I was instructed that youth, no less than love, helps to make the world go round, and that the generous and honorable competition of the young man with his fellows serves to keep this same old world sound and sweet. Ella, that "*insouciant*" and "skittish" Egerton Thorpe leaned over my chair and talked to me like a book for nearly an hour. Do you wonder that I have changed his name to John?

You will now perceive, perhaps, that it is not as a mere buccaneer of business that Leander Coggswell has imperilled his nerves, his digestion, and his reputation. No; he is a great opener-up of new fields and of new careers, a masterful unifier of the nation's forces in the modern warfare known as "trade." A man of such transcendent abilities must have

adequate opportunities, if only for the satisfaction of his own nature and its powers; and he takes or makes such opportunities as the condition of his country offers.

You may even see that it is no mere personal ambition which has brought Mrs. Starr and Gladys to the point of nervous prostration as they hesitate between two international marriages, either of which, in the light of recent experiments, may be laden with peril and disaster. No; it is a gallant desire to bring American life into conformity with the best models exhibited by the Old World, and to cast glamour upon the simple civility of a virgin continent; and all the risks and penalties of this high emprise they willingly assume.

Nor is it any mere vainglorious ambition that has brought a likable young fellow within the shadow of permanent invalidism. Not at all. "Poor Geordie," as John Thorpe still calls the lad, was probably thinking far less of himself than of his college, his town, his native country. Theirs was to be the glory. All these are the views I have listened to to-day. They are plausible and ingenious, and I hope, for my own comfort, that they may be taken as just and true.

No more for the present. I am improving daily. The sea air, the abundant sunlight, the best of care

—these will soon make Philippa herself again. Another month will see me back at the Falls.

October 15.

Ella, I may as well blurt it out: John Thorpe has asked me to marry him. If he was fluent last Wednesday, in behalf of others, judge whether he was eloquent to-day on his own account! *Now* is the time to ask me: Are you better? are you worse? Really, I can't say! I shall merely declare that I am very badly confused and that the need of a general readjustment is pressing, indeed.

I had a long talk to-day with Mr. Coggswell—the first of any moment. He scaled his grand bulk down to my infinitesimal capacity and became as human as you please. He even told me, among other things, that he was a native of our town. I pointed out that his numerous biographies—*mémoires pour servir!*—were at variance with this statement. Then he qualified: he had been born on a farm *near* Stoneham Falls and been carried over into Fairfield County at the age of one. Think of Leander M. Coggswell at the age of one! He fell into reminiscences of his early days in the Naugatuck Valley; this return upon the past may mark—for him—the beginning of the end. He has conquered the metropolis and the country at large; now, I suppose, his career

may he reviewed, with some justice, as a whole. We cannot have an omelet without breaking a few eggs; we cannot bring a vast new country under the plough without turning under, at the same time, a certain number of innocent flowers; nor can a man seat himself at the apex of an enormous fortune without the charge of many minor injustices from a chorus of outspoken enemies. The old gentleman—whom I at last view not as a sociological abstraction but as a human creature like the rest of us—has probably had his beliefs and convictions, after all, and has in some degree suffered and sacrificed himself for them.

I was glad to have him purr on about the Falls. I asked him what he meant to do for his native town, and suggested the customary library. He has promised it. You shall have a new building to replace that shabby old wreck, and you shall also have a lot of good books to fill it. John Thorpe, furthermore, is desirous that I should give due heed, on the credit side, to the museum in the city itself. This, with its collections, will go to the public in the end, and the poor old invalid's earnest pursuit of Tuscan terra-cottas must stand a proof of his desire to make his galleries—and his gifts—all the more complete.

Gladys, I think, understands the situation between John and me. She looks at me with great eyes,

ELIZA HEPBURN'S DELIVERANCE

ELIZA HEPBURN'S DELIVERANCE

I

No house up and down the whole length of the street showed more gentility without than that of Miss Eliza Hepburn, or yielded a more depressing dismalness within. The gentility was perfectly obvious to the most careless passer-by, and was thrown into yet higher relief by the pressing advances of the many boarding-houses that had driven most of the old-time residents from the neighborhood. The dismalness was more largely a matter of conjecture and of intuition, for the tight-shut blinds were in the highest degree non-communicative, and those who penetrated to the secluded interior of the house and brought back reports on the precise degree of deadness that prevailed there were few indeed.

The old lady was supposed to be without a relative in the world. She lived alone with another woman of her own age, who served at once as housekeeper and companion, and nobody called with any frequency or regularity save the young man who, for the last three or four years, had had charge of the Hepburn properties. So Eliza Hepburn lived alone,

by herself and for herself, and mouldered among her mildewed millions. These millions pervaded the street, and Miss Hepburn's name, when mentioned at any one of the boarding-house tables, passed readily as a synonym for limitless wealth.

Very few of her old neighbors and acquaintances still remembered her, and few of those who did so ever troubled themselves to wonder, at this late day, whatever could have induced Eliza to enter upon so retired a way of living. It was known that she had developed, early in life, tendencies toward the remote and the fantastic, and that she had spent abroad a youth that might more profitably have been spent at home. The more painstaking among her former associates recalled that she had passed her girlhood at Florence; and one old body, who was herself still engaged in living heartily, even ravenously, declared that Eliza had stopped living as far back as 1855.

Another friend, who remembered Eliza as a beautiful though somewhat haughty girl, wondered why there had never been a *man*. Others assured her that there had been a man, according to the general impression; and the languid conclusion finally reached was this: that Eliza in her youth must have possessed a rich and vivid imagination; that no man could have hoped to move her without having moved her imagination first; that this imagination

of hers required, for its manœuvrings, room, distance, atmosphere, perspective; and that she had found her suitor—her suitors, perhaps—too contemporaneous and too near at hand.

There was a dim tradition of Eliza's pilgrimage to Pisa. She had spent a winter in Florence, deep in the verses of Byron and Shelley, and when spring came it called her down the valley of the Arno to the dead old town where her poets had lived and written. With Eliza—even with Eliza in Florence—romance was always about so many miles away and about so many years behind. Her poets had been dead a quarter of a century. Their shrine could be reached by a long day in the diligence. This was far enough in point of distance, but not too far, and remote enough in point of time, but not too remote. The finger of romance beckoned Eliza Hepburn to Pisa, and to Pisa she went gladly, eagerly. She carried her imagination with her as well as her trunk and spent the happiest week of her life in mooning up and down the Pisan Lungarno, and in shedding a roseate atmosphere over the silent and empty streets that had witnessed the intimate daily comings and goings of her favorite bards.

But forty years lay between that day and this. Her early romances were now as worn as her massive old wardrobes, and as dusty as her tinkling old

chandeliers, and there was no particular consolation in the general situation save this, that she was able to get for herself anything that money could buy. But she did not always know what it was she wanted, nor did she understand just what steps to take to get it, and the days where frequent enough when she felt deserted and ineffective and forlorn. Here was the end, then; the eager studies, the passionate enthusiasms of her earlier years had led to nothing more than this. These were the days when she sank weakly back upon her shabby old sofa, and spread her thin palms across her temples, and told herself once again that she had put a great deal into life and had got very little out of it.

She seldom left the house; when she did it was usually to go to concerts and to exhibitions of pictures. At concerts she would wait patiently through the heavy German quartettes and sonatas that sometimes held off for so long the delivery of a good old-fashioned Italian aria, and at exhibitions she would creep along each wall, intent as ever upon Roman peasants and scenes from the Venetian lagoons. She owned a Sassoferrato Madonna that was down in her will to go to the museum; and she had one particular organ-grinder who knew that if he but halted his instrument upon the billowy brick pavement, under a certain spind-

ling elm, it was merely a matter of time when a given pair of shutters should be opened on a crack and a piece of silver deposited upon the sill. The man was a newcomer, and had brought over his instrument with him. It played pieces all alien to us and to our day—things from "Nabucco" and "Belisario" and other operas that seem never to have crossed the ocean in their entirety; and long after the operator had withdrawn from the sated neighborhood, one lonely old woman, busy in a belated and futile fashion over her dictionaries and readers—it was still Eliza Hepburn's balked ambition, at sixty, to speak Italian—would hum softly and tremulously at intervals:

> "Life hath no power to move me to sadness
> While fondly held to thy bosom in gladness,"

and then drop her text-books to relapse into memories of other days.

This continued state of quiescence and of retirement was perfectly satisfactory to Agatha Mills, who went on airing the linen-closets, interviewing the grocer, and regarding herself as the chief, if not the only, person to have a place in old Eliza's will. As for young Dart, he gave this worthy attendant no cause for solicitude. He went on looking after the affairs of the estate with faithfulness and efficiency;

but he was so serious and heavy that his attendance never produced a scintilla of brightness or of diversion, and this particular variety of devotion, however unimpeachable, however long-enduring, seldom prompts a woman to push gratitude beyond the bounds of discretion, No; Hugh Dart would be rewarded on a strictly business-like basis, and old Eliza's lifelong friend and confidante should reap her full reward at last.

II

One day, after an unbroken fortnight of her customary coma, Eliza Hepburn experienced a sensation—nay, two. The first of these came to her at one of her annual exhibitions.

The hall was almost empty of visitors. A dozen people loitered about, looking at cows, portraits, French peasants; and a pair of earnest truth-seekers were conscientiously pursuing a hay-stack that occupied seventeen broad gilt frames, one after another, and displayed itself under seventeen different atmospheric conditions at seventeen different times of day.

Eliza Hepburn, grazing along the wall with her tall, slender figure bent forward, and her fine black brows intent upon possible contadini and gondolas,

suddenly realized her intrusion into the hay-field. With a toss of the head she dismissed the twelve stacks that still loomed before her and passed her practised eye rapidly along to what lay just beyond them. It was here that she received her first sensation, one that instantly brought out of her a gasp and a start.

The canvas was only a small affair, little more than a foot either way. It made apparently no general appeal; not another soul seemed to share her interest. But it touched Eliza to the quick; it set her trembling for pure joy and brought an instant tear to each of her black eyes.

For she found herself face to face with a daring little fantasia upon the one theme that could still move and thrill and satisfy her—the everlasting and inexhaustible theme of Italy. Some ardent and audacious youth, combining the fortunate moment and the felicitous hand, had summoned up all of his airy boldness and had fixed upon one mere shred of cloth his epitome of the whole fair Italian land—not the land that is, but the land that is not, and yet must and shall be; the Italy that we need and demand, and will not be denied. It was no mere literal Italy, of any actual time, of any set scene; it was Italy in its spirit, in its *fine fleur*, in its essence essenced yet again. It was not the Italy of to-day, nor of yesterday, nor of the days of eld; it was the Italy of all

three. It was not the Italy of mountain, or of sea, or of plain, but again of all three. Cloud and wave, and temple column and olive grove, and bell-tower and sunlit sail, all joined in one suave and alluring chorus: "If you are of the kingdom, enter." Eliza Hepburn heard their song, and knew herself of the kingdom, and entered forthwith proudly.

"Where have they brought me?" she asked herself in a tremulous undertone. Her moist eyes tried to fix themselves upon the canvas, her wavering hand stretched out caressingly toward the very frame that inclosed it. "Is it Garda? Is it the Gulf of Spezia? Is it the coast of Calabria?" Yet she knew it was none of these, but all of them, and more. She saw that this tiny landscape symbolized the whole peninsula, just as crown and scepter symbolize the power that governs it. She felt a key extended toward her—a key to unlock the realm of fancy, of memory, of joy—and she took a firm hold upon it and passed on into her own.

A mountainous sea-coast, at sunset, with a fishing-village and its port—this, in substance, was all that the picture offered to the strolling visitor. And such, in truth, was its bare theme; but treatment, development, counterpoint, if one may say so, were such as to send the air resounding with infinite reverberations through the depths of old Eliza's nature.

She felt on her cheek the light breeze that turned the stilling waves all scintillant before the enkindled western sky and stirred the branches of the cleft and sombre cypresses that drew their solemn line up the hill-side to the gateway of the old Palladian villa. She heard the Ave Maria ring out from the shafted loggia of the ancient Lombard bell-tower, and caught the click of sliding tackle as the red sail dropped from the mast of the last sloop arrived in port. She scented the odor of lemon trees that stood in yellowed rows under the long-drawn shield of pillared pergolas, and felt beneath her feet the crunching of myrtle in dusky and long-forgotten gardens. But before all, beyond all, above all, the sky and its clouds charmed her, enchanted her, overpowered her. They half filled the heavens, they swathed the blue mountain-peaks, they canopied the sea—great masses of delicate, softly-rounded cumuli, glowing with ethereal pink in the last moments of the sunset. Their luminous vapors flooded, tinged, transfigured everything: sea, earth, and sky—man, nature, man's monuments in nature; all appeared a roseate phantasmagoria under their light, such a light as never is, indeed, and yet justly should be—oh, some time, somewhere. . . .

Tremors of joy and of longing, too strong to stand against, ran through poor Eliza's body; she cast about weakly for the support of some sympathizing bench.

She felt her old limbs giving way; the address of "No. 144" had been too acute, too pungent, too penetrating. She disposed her dark skirts, like so many dusky petals, over a shimmering oak settle just behind her, and closed her eyes, and placed a hand upon her breast, and felt herself blissfully dying —the rose, the very rose itself—in aromatic pain.

A few moments passed before she ventured to reopen her eyes. The picture was still there, and shining more than ever. It shone, and glittered, and glimmered, and swam, and wavered, and disappeared, and Eliza, with a conclusive sob, pulled out her pocket-handkerchief and wiped the tears away. Then she took one more long look at the picture, and rose and walked out into the corridor, and approached the desk of the young woman who sold catalogues and answered inquiries.

"Caroline," she said, "give me one of those yellow tickets."

The young woman opened a drawer and handed out a card on which were the letters SOLD.

"When can I take it away?" asked Eliza.

"The exhibition will be over in a week," replied the attendant.

Eliza marched back to the painting with her ticket and thrust it into a corner of the frame. Then she sat down on the bench and looked again at the one

picture in the world, and presently her head drooped into the hollow of her hand, and Italy had once more claimed her and her thought as its own.

After a little the scanty attendance of a lowering day was increased by one. A prepossessing young fellow of twenty-four or twenty-five looked in at the doorway and his glance, too, was drawn toward the one picture in the world. He saw the placard it bore, and a general illumination began forthwith. The sulking sun burst through the skylight, and the whole universe was flooded with the same glow which glorified that bit of Italian sea-coast.

Then a slight frown displaced the smile of surprise and delight upon the young fellow's face. There indeed shone his picture, plainly marked with the approval of some connoisseur; yet who gave it the slightest heed, who was even within ten yards of it? Nobody but a dismal old soul moping on the bench just in front of it, who could not appreciate it to the extent of merely lifting her head to look upon it!

III

Eliza's second sensation came to her that same evening, within her own house, or, I should perhaps say, within her own garden; for behind the house she cultivated a few beds of flowers and one or two clumps

of shrubbery—all that the narrow town lot would allow—and she was accustomed to spend the twilight hour contemplating this little plantation from the height of her back porch, a structure half inclosed by ornate iron grilles, whose stubborn tendency to rustiness was corrected by a pendulous growth of wistaria, reminiscent of Como. The early moon, at its full, threw the shadow of the syringas across the bed of mignonette, and the hubbub of the city sounded merely as a confused rumble in the far distance.

All at once a chord was struck on a piano; the sound seemed to come through the open window of one of the boarding-houses close by. Another chord followed, then others still—in progressions usual, then unusual, then freakish, then altogether unauthorized and impossible. Then a few chromatic runs were reeled off, and then a few arpeggios; then the performer, having tried the instrument, as it seemed, and found it good, made an orderly advance into a sedate but cheerful little movement by Haydn or Mozart, repeating the more grateful phrases, and even throwing them into other keys.

Agatha Mills, seated beside Eliza Hepburn beneath the canopy of rust and of bloom, made a quick gesture of impatience.

"There's that same old piano starting up again!" she protested.

"It isn't the same old piano," returned Eliza; "it's a new one."

The invisible performer suddenly abandoned Haydn in the midst of a bar and entered the field of the *Volkslied.* Two or three familiar bits of melody came up for treatment, a treatment markedly plaintive and sentimental, and when the emotional charge seemed incomplete on the first playing of an air, there would be a second playing of it. Then the performer left the Germans altogether and went over to the Italians. The abruptness of the transition was softened by a pause on Bellini; the instrument gave out two or three airs from "Norma," and did not allow their pathos and cloying sweetness to be impaired. Eliza breathed a little sigh of content, for the player was just entering her own favorite field. Eliza looked up at the moon, too, and thanked that beneficent orb for so well-timed a presence. What, indeed, were "*Casta Diva*" without it?

Agatha Mills twitched in her rocking-chair.

"That young woman might leave us at least one evening of peace," she grumbled.

"It isn't a woman," rejoined Eliza; "it's a man."

The musician now left the realm of sentiment for that of melodrama. He began to revel among the crass and coarse-grained sins of the young Verdi. He threw himself into a finale from "Ernani,"

which he executed with great *brio*, casting in abundant runs and modulations of his own, and ending with a bit of free fantasia that might have been taken either as an off-hand characterization of the composer's style, or as a frank burlesque upon it. But it was taken seriously enough by Eliza. To her it was the music of very romance, and so fittest of all music to harmonize with the hour and the place and the emotions of her day.

The piano suddenly ceased.

"Well," observed Agatha Mills, "I hope the old fellow has finally played himself out."

"It isn't an old fellow," retorted Eliza; "it's a young one."

After a moment the young fellow—for Eliza was perfectly correct in her surmise as to the player's age and sex—resumed his labors.

"Dear me!" began Miss Mills protestingly.

"Agatha," said Eliza, "keep still!"

The abrupt Alpine grandeur of this remark was as astounding to Eliza's companion as would have been the intrusion of Mont Blanc, in all its chilling majesty, into their placid garden. During the thirty years of their association Eliza Hepburn had never used that tone till now. Agatha was as one struck dumb.

Eliza was the soul of kindness, but she felt herself

justified, for the first notes of the resumed attack put matters upon an entirely new footing. Eliza was now listening, not to a mere piano, but to a full orchestra; and this orchestra had just transformed itself, after the naïve old fashion of 1835, into a vast guitar, and its very first phrase, a "plunky-plunky, plunk, plunk" of unmistakable import, heralded an operatic situation than which none could be more moving or more endeared. Eliza had emerged from the swaying shadows of her rusty back porch, and had moved up once more to the front of her box at the Pergola, in Florence, and *Lucy Ashton* had just signed the marriage contract, and the principals were sorting themselves out from the chorus and lining up along the footlights, and everybody on the boards and off joined in the moment of hushed expectancy that always precedes the bursting of the most harmonic of all stage storms. "I *will* enjoy this in quiet!" muttered Eliza, as her fingers gripped the arms of her chair; and then, upon the very beat, she began with the violins, the clarinets, and the black-cloaked tenor. "'Chi mi frena in tal momento?'" she hummed softly, she knew the opening words of scores of the old operatic airs.

But with the termination of the first movement the player, yielding to peculiar temptations held out by key and rhythm, effected a sudden change of scene:

he left the throng of Scottish wedding-guests with their acute problem on their hands, and airily moved off to Mantua, to pause at the lonely inn where the jester's daughter meets her fate. "Bella figlia dell' amore," blithely began the *Duke*, to the puzzlement of Eliza, who felt the irregularity without being able to detect it. The *Duke* finished with a little flourish and grace-note, and the rippling phrases of the fluent *Maddalena* were now clearly due; but the player seemed suddenly to recall the dilemma of the house of Ashton, and returned to the Highlands forthwith, to voice, in phrases of vigorous sweep and dignity, the protests of the barytone brother. Eliza was at home once more, and the light cloud of uncertainty was dispelled. But alas! the situation of *Rigoletto* and his child claimed the attention of the young man once again, and presently poor *Gilda* was gasping out her woes in dotted eighths and sixteenths far above the top line of the staff. Then, as a crowning effect, the cynical young fellow summoned all his hardihood and nerve to clench his demonstration of the fact that it was as easy to juggle with the old masters in pairs as apart; he took the closing phrases of both pieces and wove them into a finale of the utmost vigor, humor, pomp, passion, irony, and grandiloquence. The piano itself, new to his touch, was astonished; the neighborhood rang; and a frank young voice near by, at

the player's elbow perhaps, broke out into laughing applause.

Eliza was delighted. The irony of the thing passed her by; the vigor she accepted for earnestness, and the passion she refined to sentiment. Ah, Florence, Florence! where she had so often heard these same airs bawled melodiously by shabby youths who strolled along the Lungarno Acciajoli under the sweet Tuscan stars. Nor were they the less lovely here to-night. The moon beamed down, the syringas rustled in the breeze, that lovely picture would hang upon her walls within a week—ah, it was almost too much for one day!

"Well, he can play, anyhow," conceded Agatha Mills when all was over.

"I bought one of his pictures to-day," said Eliza, out of a full heart.

"Why, Eliza!" exclaimed the other, with a shade of surprise, even of reproach, in her voice, "I shouldn't quite have expected *that!*"

"Why not, pray?"

"I supposed it was only—only girls who bought photographs of these public entertainers. He is giving concerts here, then, is he?"

"I didn't say 'photograph,'" retorted Eliza sharply; "I said 'picture.' I might have said 'painting,' perhaps."

"Then he's not a——"

"Not a pianist; he's a painter. I bought one of his things at the Academy to-day."

"How much did you give for it?"

"I don't know; I never thought about the price."

"Tut, tut!" Then: "What is his name?"

"Chester; that is the way it was signed."

"Is it a good one?"

"It's the loveliest thing you ever——"

"I don't believe it."

"Why not?"

"All this would be too much for one man to do, and do so well."

"The picture, Agatha, is as beautiful as the music. You don't understand," pursued Eliza, with a serious emphasis that seemed the only thing to interfere with a threatened lapse into reverie, "how two such talents may unite in the same person. I do."

"You are mistaken about him," insisted Agatha. She eyed her companion curiously; Eliza, who had never stood out too clearly in the eyes of her old associate and friend, now seemed as if retiring within the penumbra of a highly significant past.

"Not at all," rejoined the other. "Or, if I am, we can soon find it out. I shall send in and invite him to call. I'll write the note the first thing to-morrow

morning, and you can have Oliver leave it at the door."

"But, Eliza——"

"'Sh! I'm going to do exactly as I please. I'm old enough. This house needs young people. So do I. Come, let us step inside. Have the lamp lit in the library. I'm going to write to-night."

IV

"Yes," said Eliza to herself, as she extended her hand to put out the gas, preparatory to getting into bed, "he shall come to see us, and shall turn his own picture into his own music. No two men—to-day—could have the feeling for Italy that he has, and I am sure that he can improvise as freely in the one field as he can invent in the other."

Eliza rose next morning in the same mood and with the same opinion, and kept both till nearly lunch-time, when Agatha Mills came in to alter them.

"Oliver has brought back your note. There is no one of the name of Chester in the house. They told him, though, that a young man of that name had called once or twice lately to inquire after one of their lodgers."

"What was the lodger's name?"

"Why, how do we know?"

"Find out."

In the course of the day Agatha did so.

"His name is Flagg," she reported.

"Is he a musician?"

"Yes."

"Is he my musician?"

"Probably."

"Very well; I shall send in a note for *him*."

The next evening Clement Flagg, thus imperiously and unceremoniously summoned, appeared in Eliza Hepburn's drawing-room. The whole boarding-house knew about it. The whole boarding-house table talked about it. The new and unknown occupant of the second-floor back bedroom became at once a person of consequence.

Eliza looked him over rather shyly as he stood under the flickering candles set in one of her old brass sconces, and wondered whether she should be able to accept half the loaf for the whole. He was a young man of twenty-seven, and seemed gentlemanly enough, good-looking enough, and self-possessed enough. "However," said Eliza to herself, "he seems —slight; I hope he won't turn out to be frivolous and skittish. I doubt if he has ever had any real experiences, if he has ever really got beneath the surface. And I wonder if he has quite found himself yet."

But she brushed all these cursory characterizations aside, and presented the young man to Agatha Mills, and told him frankly why she had asked him to come. Eliza let herself out; she said what she meant and what she felt. No one could do less than meet her open-mindedness half-way, and the young man, accommodating himself readily enough to her enthusiasm, bowed and smiled, and presently found himself in place on the piano-stool.

He began discreetly with Henselt and Grieg and a little dab of Gluck. He knew it was no place, no time, for a "show piece," but he gave her some of the choicest bits out of his repertory, and played them with complete care. When the last of them was over he paused and turned round.

"Thank you," said Eliza, coldly.

The Northern schools, then, would not do. He changed to Scarlatti and Paisiello.

"Thank you," said Eliza, less coldly.

The old Neapolitan school was not quite the thing. He burst into Rossini's "Inflammatus."

"Thank you so much!" cried Eliza, warmly.

The young fellow tossed his fluffy locks and laughed.

Eliza crossed the room and took a little lyre-backed chair close by the instrument.

"Why is your name Flagg instead of Chester?" she asked abruptly.

He laughed again.

"I don't know. It happened that way. Perhaps because I flutter. The name of Chester belongs to somebody else—to my closest friend. We share the two names between us; that is the best I can do for you."

"Is your friend a painter?"

"Very much so."

"There, Agatha!" cried Eliza, toward Miss Mills, half invisible in her dusky corner. Then: "Does he live here? Is he in town now? Will you bring him here with you?"

"He lives over in the next street."

"I have just bought one of his pictures."

"*The* one?"

"Yes," replied Eliza confidently, "*the* one."

"Good; that will please him."

"How old is he?"

"A few years younger than I."

"Where did you meet him?"

"In Venice."

"Have you ever been to Florence?"

"No; I have never been south of the Apennines. I studied at Stuttgart, and sometimes spent my vacations at Milan and Como; and I saw several of the other towns of the north—Venice, Verona, and so on. I knew some fellows who were studying at the

Milan Conservatory. They were full of opera and nothing else. They almost filled me!"

He sat sidewise on his seat, one leg thrown over the other; and his hands, as he spoke, carelessly wound vague bits of old-fashioned melody through a maze of modulations.

"I like what you are playing," said Eliza; "what is it?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. A 'Ricordo di Milano,' you might call it."

"Play it again."

"Again? Impossible. A thing past is past; I never try to fish it back."

"You were improvising, then?"

"Yes."

"I felt sure you could. It seems so easy for you, too."

"As easy as breathing."

"Go on with it. I prefer that to anything else."

"Give me a theme."

"Tell me about Venice. I was never there but once, and only for a week. It rained the whole time."

He smiled quizzically. "You wish a barcarole?"

"No; decidedly not!" retorted Eliza indignantly.

"A fête with lanterns?"

"Not at all; you can do better than that," declared Eliza, with some severity.

Flagg bowed, but no longer smiled; he felt himself put upon his mettle.

"Give me the Venice I used to feel so keenly and to think about so often. Make it a suite—like this: Part One—'The Beginnings.' Give me the humble settlement made by those who fled from Attila to the lagoons and founded this wonderful city-state. Think how weak, how obscure——"

"Ah, it is easy enough to make music weak and obscure!"

Eliza gave a tight smile and tossed her head. "Part Two—'Venice in her Heyday'; or, 'The Pride of Life.' How would that title strike you?"

"It's fine!"

"When you play that part you are to think of Veronese and Lepanto and the Bucintoro, and all those fêtes and magnificences, and——"

"It goes like this, I suppose?"

The young man chose a remote key and burst into a pompous and magniloquent march. It was full of a stately arrogance; it seemed to portray not only the pride of life, as Veronese knew it, but the lust of the eye, as made manifest by Titian; and it gave hints not only of the world—the great world of pomp and pleasure and show—but of the flesh and of the devil, too.

"And what is Part Three?" he asked, stopping abruptly in the middle of a measure.

"'The Decadence,'" replied Eliza.

He fingered his moustache thoughtfully. He made a little survey of old Eliza and of old Eliza's dusky drawing-room: the ancient cornice shrinking away into the dim recesses of the ceiling; the sombre and faded portraits that looked out so dully from the tarnished ovals of their frames; the dingy chandelier, whose broken prisms gave out now and then a feeble tinkle; the furnishings, so old, so worn, so out of date. "I believe I will play the third movement first," he said.

"Think of Tiepolo and of the Ridotto," counselled Eliza.

"Tiepolo shall fresco your ceiling; but as for the Ridotto, let us not look to be too gay."

He began with a few pensive and plaintive phrases, full of light hints of delusive splendor, of fictitious gayety, of airy abandon half checked in the middle of its course, and threw over the whole a languishing rococo charm, an air of dreamy fatigue. Eliza dropped her chin into her elbow, and Agatha Mills, in her shaded corner, resolutely set her face against any impending address to her feelings.

Presently the note became more poignant; each tone seemed a winged dart of personal appeal.

Plaintiveness turned to wistfulness. An opulent nature had spent itself in vain; want followed upon waste, and dust upon decay. Two clever hands threw down all bars that set off the field of the ineffective, the disappointed, the superseded, and invited any who would to set foot within that populous void. The note deepened. The burden became that of lost youth, lost hopes, lost ideals. The player, allowing his hands to shift for themselves, had fixed a close scrutiny upon Eliza. She, with her eyes on the floor, and oblivious of all save the music, hardly realized herself a-tremble; but Agatha Mills, with a keen regard fastened on Flagg, felt a rising indignation at what seemed to her the complacent cruelty of youth.

"He is playing upon her feelings," she muttered, "and is enjoying doing so. I won't have it."

Eliza was filled by this music; it was speaking to her and for her as she herself never could have spoken, and she was upon the point of passing from trembling to tears. Flagg played on; it all grew more poignant, more personal, more pathetic, with every measure; he was delighted, in his youthful egotism, to have found so impressionable, so responsive a subject, and smiled at the thought of all those reservoirs of sweet and exquisite torture at his command, yet still unopened.

A lingering minor cadence came, eloquent of hope-

lessness and of regret. Eliza's bosom rose and fell, and Agatha Mills's loyal elbow brushed a book from the table beside which she sat. The book struck the floor with a smart slap, the music suddenly ceased with an impatient gesture from the performer, and Eliza's respiration presently became normal again.

She thanked her new protégé with a little pant or two, and when he rose to go she asked him, with complete tranquillity, to return soon, and to bring his friend.

"Tell him I shall have his picture on my walls within a few days. He shall say where it is to hang. And let him bring any sketches that he may happen to have by him."

"Ah," thought Flagg, as he went down Eliza's front steps, "why bring in Austin and his pictures—at least so promptly? I and my art should suffice for the entertainment of any reasonable woman. How much does she want, I wonder?"

V

"Dear me, yes," said Flagg, in answer to Chester's inquiry; "she is as original and independent as you please. She seems to know what she wants, and doesn't hesitate to ask for it."

The two were just mounting Eliza's steps, and

Chester viewed with some apprehension the hand that his companion extended toward the door-bell.

"I hope she doesn't presume on her money?"

"Oh, no."

"On her age, then?"

"Not exactly; more on her needs, I should say."

They found Eliza in her drawing-room. The picture had just come home, and she was trying, in the lingering light of the late afternoon, to find the proper place for it. She carried it about from one side of the room to the other, just as if it were a restless child. Clasped in her arms, it seemed the very Benjamin of her little pictorial flock.

Eliza welcomed young Chester with a frank and flattering transport that quite paled her reception of Flagg. She liked him immediately, and liked him very much. He seemed more modest, more quiet, more stable than the other. Whatever the natural ardor of his temperament, he burned before this opulent and elderly stranger with an enthusiasm steady but well moderated. In the course of half an hour Eliza felt that he was like an open-grate fire after a flaring torch.

She thanked him fervently, and complimented him with a ready richness of phrase that surprised even herself. She deferred completely to his advice about the hanging of the picture, and put him through

an ardent catechism relative to his Italian journeyings.

He had been everywhere, just as she had felt from the start. He took her off to Sicily and into the remoteness of Apulia and the Basilicata, and told her of Taormina and Taranto and Trapani. His sketch-books teemed with towns whose names she had never even heard—towns in the Abruzzi, in the Marches, in Tuscany itself. She felt her picture—happily disposed, at last, above the piano—to be drawn from sources richer and more remote than she had supposed; but she would not ask for details, nor would the painter, perhaps, have given them. Pluck the rose apart, petal by petal, and what is left?

"Isn't it glorious!" she cried, clasping her hands and lifting adoring eyes toward her little masterpiece. "Play it for me," she said, turning to Flagg.

Flagg, with the intrepidity of his years and the self-confidence of his talents, attempted the impossible. He exhausted his art and his own nature on the theme; but Eliza could only pretend—no more—that he had satisfied her.

"Something is wanting, eh?" he said, looking at her over his shoulder; "and I know what it is, I think: I have forgotten the clouds."

He had an intense disdain of the composer who falls back upon the mere portrayal of natural phe-

nomena—the most banal variety of "programme music," to his mind; but this wealthy and sympathetic woman must be pleased at all costs, nor must the primacy pass from him to the newcomer (whom he himself had introduced) without an effort to retain it.

"Pink sunset clouds require a different key and a different tempo. Listen, now. I shall do them in six sharps and in twelve-eight time."

He repeated his former theme with some freedom, and set it off by a waving, billowy movement, light but firm, and delicate yet broad. The clouds loomed up bravely and flooded his composition just as they flooded the landscape itself. Eliza was pleased, and made her pleasure plain.

"But," she murmured, "where are my trees—my olives, my cypresses?"

"Ah, the Tree," rejoined Flagg, disguising a possible impatience; "that is a topic by itself. It opens up quite a new field."

"Well, open it," commanded Eliza.

"The Tree—a suite," proclaimed Flagg. "In four parts. Four parts—then why not make it a sonata? Or, if you can orchestrate it, a symphony? Can you?"

"I can," said Eliza firmly.

"First movement—*allegretto*," proceeded Flagg. "Now, what tree would invite a wholesome, straight-

forward treatment in common time and the key of C?"

"Try an apple-orchard," suggested Chester.

"No," objected Eliza; "the apple is too familiar, too prosaic. There is the oak—the evergreen oak—and there is the chestnut. Think of those tawny groves round Maggiore, with the October wind sweeping through them!"

"Good; the chestnut, then. Second movement—*adagio*. The Lombardy poplar?"

"Dear me, no," protested Eliza; "the cypress. A funereal cypress avenue, by all means, with plenty of trombones and horns. I will undertake to play them; I hear the sad procession already."

"Third movement—*scherzo*," proceeded Flagg. "I should like to know who has got any suggestion for *that!*"

"So should I," observed Eliza, in grave uncertainty.

"The olive," called Chester boldly.

"The olive?" cried the others. "Of all sad trees the saddest!"

"But take it on a clear day," persisted Chester, "under a bright blue sky, when a light breeze is abroad and all the leaves rustle together and turn up their white under-sides. Who shall say, then, that the poor, world-weary old thing is not making a rueful jest of its own feebleness and futility and

discontent? Take the olives of San Remo, of Girgenti ——"

"We accept the olive," said Eliza; "only we shall have to divide up our violins into eight or ten parts."

"Like this," said Flagg, executing a kind of rapid tremolo on the upper octaves of the piano with both hands. "Then the finale—*allegro furioso*. Of course we are all agreed about that: a storm sweeping through the pine forest on some rugged mountain-side. Only"—to Eliza—"there will have to be considerable activity among the double-basses.'

"I can play a dozen as easily as one," she replied. "And so our woodland symphony is complete. Chestnut-trees from Pallanza; cypresses from Verona —the Giusti Gardens, you know; olives from—oh," —to Chester—"we shall have to fall back upon your drawings."

The young man modestly opened a new portfolio, and Eliza threw herself upon it with abandon. The symphony, though ready to run off Flagg's finger-tips, remained, to his mortification, in abeyance, while Eliza rushed headlong into her rash plan for the correlation of the arts, and the merging of two artists' personalities in one.

She fluttered leaves rapidly; she seized upon this drawing and exclaimed over that. "You must make

me a set of four paintings," she cried to Chester; "you have all the material here. Yes, you shall paint my symphony!" Flagg had played Chester's work, and Chester must now paint Flagg's work—even before it came to be performed, as it seemed.

"And they shall be shown," cried Eliza, with unabated vivacity. "You must have an exhibition of your works."

"But as to that——" began Chester.

"You have enough to *make* an exhibition?"

"Oh, yes; but who knows me, who cares about me, who would come to see them?"

"Nobody knows you? All the more reason for showing."

"But the gallery, the difficulties, the expense——"

"There shall be no difficulty about that," declared Eliza.

Chester withdrew, full of flattering hopes. Flagg, who accompanied him out, was less elate; the symphony was still awaiting performance.

"Is my art an independent thing?" he asked himself. "Am I possessed of an individual personality, or am I only a part of somebody else? Or does the ravenous creature require the fusion of two personalities to produce a single complete one? Or what?"

VI

"I HAVE a niece," announced Eliza.

Agatha Mills set down her coffee-cup without a word. Oliver, who was passing the toast, stopped in the midst of his service, with his arm extended in mid-air.

"Yes," said Eliza, detaching still more definitely from the morning's yield of bills, postal-cards, and newspapers a letter in a square envelope. "She sends me this."

Oliver recovered the use of his arm and set the dish down. Agatha still found no words, and only stared.

"She is poor brother George's child, it appears. I never knew he had a child. I never heard of his having married."

Agatha still stared. "Where does she write from?" she asked finally.

"From out beyond the Missouri. Poor George had mines or something, I gather."

"What is her name?"

"Maybelle. Maybelle Rutter Hepburn—so she signs herself. I presume Rutter was her mother's name."

"Maybelle!" groaned Agatha. Then: "Is she coming on?"

"It seems so. I judge, anyway, that it wouldn't need much urging to bring her."

Agatha took refuge in her coffee-cup. She did not know what to think nor what to say.

Some five or six weeks had passed since the purchase of Austin Chester's picture and the irruption of Chester and Flagg into the jejune and dismal routine of Eliza Hepburn's existence. These weeks had made a vast change in the situation and had completely altered Agatha Mills's position in the house. The introduction of new elements had challenged her easy dominance and had compromised a future that she had come to look upon as fully assured. Youth had entered and made itself felt—was having its own way, in fact. "Where will it all end?" was Agatha's constant query. And, "Where shall *I* end?" would be her plaintive supplement.

Now a further influx of youth seemed imminent; change was to follow on change. How was the girl to be considered? As one danger the more, or as an aid in time of direst need? "Will my position here be finally ruined," asked Agatha of herself, "or shall I be able to play these elements off against each other, and to fight fire with fire?"

Agatha, in her state of incertitude, refrained from open comment. She favored Eliza with no opinions, but limited herself to such simple inquiries as she felt

the situation actually demanded. The situation, in its earlier and simpler form, she had already discussed with Hugh Dart.

If Agatha's state of feeling fell considerably short of panic, Dart's went far beyond the limits of annoyance, and serious annoyance, too. He had met the brace of young men more than once in Eliza's drawing-room, and could not bring himself to believe that either in their abilities or their personalities was there enough to justify Miss Hepburn in the wilful and freakish courses she had lately taken to. He held a cool, well-tempered view of the arts in general; they had their place, a secondary, subordinate one; and the artist, as such, he had never been able to fit satisfactorily into the general scheme that he had devised for his own use and guidance. Checks that tried his patience were beginning to find their way back from the bank to the office of the estate. Eliza was purchasing water-colors at fanciful prices, and was enriching the coffers of the makers of picture-frames. Eliza was arranging with publishers for the printing of nocturnes and ballads, and a voucher for several hundred dollars, which came drifting along one morning, made it plain that she had determined upon giving more publicity to Clement Flagg's "Fredegunde" than could be gained by the performance of morceaux from it in her drawing-

room; a stage production being impracticable, they were compromising on the publication of the voice and piano score. Bills were rolling in, too, from the importers of foreign books and photographs, and though the amounts were small they helped along the notion that Miss Hepburn was rapidly putting herself into a frame of mind where almost anything might be looked for.

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Agatha, catching at Dart in the front hall one evening, just as he was leaving. "They're simply having their own way with her. You saw how the drawing-room looked? Clement Flagg has had the lambrequins and curtains taken down and the rugs carried away, so as to get a better effect for his precious playing. He composes ballades and *pensées* and things for her, and dedicates them to her, and plays them at her, and makes her cry, and stirs her all up. He's got a real power over her, and just delights in exercising it. We had the piano-tuner here again only last week, and now she spends half her time picking out old airs with one finger, and the rest of the time she is studying Italian with Chester. He has the language at his tongue's end, and is going to improve her accent, it seems. And they speak it together all the time—or try to; even at table they talk over me and around me and across me, and I can't

understand a single word. It's all wrong; it's all wrong."

"And you were all four at the opera last night, I believe?" said Dart, with gravity—the almost supernatural gravity with which a man of thirty may discuss the doings of men a few years his juniors. "At least the office boy was sent around for tickets."

"Yes; and we sat in a box—the first time I ever found myself in such a situation in my life. And Eliza—I wish you could have been there; I never saw anything like it in all my days. I don't know how she came by the clothes she wore; she must have been getting things without letting me know about it. You've never seen her but in black and brown and gray; you wouldn't have recognized her! And that white hair of hers, rolled up, sort of, over those black eyebrows; I'm sure I can't think where she got the idea. And she wore one of those standing-up things in it; I don't know the name for them, but I've seen them in the fashion papers. Well, she sat there, right at the front of the box, between those two boys, and looked tremendous. And both of them paying court to her in the eyes of the whole house! And she dropping her fan or mislaying her programme as artlessly as a girl of twenty! We were a spectacle in ourselves; everybody stared. Eliza stared back. I had no idea she could be so stately, or could use a glass with such

insolent composure. And those boys, with their attentions and their applause, finally drew the eyes of the people on the stage. Pretty soon the singers began to bow to Eliza. I never felt so conspicuous in my life. I just went to the back of the box. Then the curtain came down, and they began to talk about the Pergola. Do you know what the Pergola is?"

"No, I don't," said Dart honestly.

"Then Chester told about a gala at the—the Pagliano. Do you know what the Pagliano is? *I* don't!"

"Some foreign theatre, possibly."

"In the next act there was a great to-do. Out came the tenor again and again, and all of a sudden Eliza threw her bouquet on the stage. 'Eliza!' I gasped. 'Better late than never!' she returned. I saw how it was: she had been saving herself up for almost forty years, and those boys understood just how it was, and had set her imagination to work with their own imaginations, and—oh, what is to be done?"

Dart pondered. He felt that the dawning rivalry between the two young men would probably go further than the mere gratification of their own vanity by working on the susceptibilities of a lonely and inexperienced old woman. Eliza was rich as well as susceptible, and self-love might soon enough give way to self-interest. Those millions were there, ready, so far as either competitor knew, to fall into the

hands of—nobody in particular. They had had their first nibblings from them; why should there not presently come to them the idea of replacing nobody in particular by somebody in particular?

"Well," said Agatha anxiously, as she held the pass of the outer door, "shall the girl come or not come?"

Dart pondered a moment. "I think she had better come." He himself would furnish the somebody in particular.

"Very well; she shall." Agatha scented her own defeat—or, at any rate, discomfiture—in either case; but if the girl could prove relationship there would at least be defeat with honor. "We will write her to-morrow."

VII

Miss Maybelle Hepburn came East a fortnight later. Eliza had considered her credentials and had accepted her as an authentic niece. "But she sha'n't call herself Maybelle. Mabel will do."

Miss Hepburn turned out to be a hearty young barbarian—sound, vigorous, good-looking in a way, and about the age of twenty. She had lately emerged from mourning for her mother, and she seemed inclined to put the past behind her and to reach out with a firm hand after the good things of life. She

had evidently been looked upon as a beauty in her own region, and appeared bent on exacting the homage that is beauty's due. Eliza soon saw that she was frank, affectionate, and disinterested. She had been accustomed to financial ups and downs; she was used to money, and she was used to the absence of money. "She is no self-seeker," said Eliza.

Mabel found her aunt's household in the full swing of its new artistic activities. The very first evening she was hurried off to a concert, where a small orchestra, provided by Eliza, performed the overture to "Fredegunde," and an entr'acte or two from the same work. "Fredegunde" had been composed, of course, during the pre-Italian period. It was very German in conception and execution; it was dry, technical, abstruse. It bristled with the erudition of a young man who had not yet had time to forget how he had learned to write. Mabel was bored; they caught her yawning. Even Eliza's chief satisfaction came from the feeling that she had at least shown her gratitude.

Mabel arrived in time to witness also the culmination of a series of portraits of her aunt, undertaken by Chester. The final crescendo was reached in a full-length of Eliza in her grand-opera *tenue;* the preceding portraits had been in water-color, and had shown Eliza before a number of romantic backgrounds of

her own choosing. It all began with Eliza's looking through one of Chester's sketch-books. "Ha!" she exclaimed; "Palermo! I have always wanted to be taken on the terrace above the Marina, with Monte Pellegrino behind me like a big blue tent, and all the shipping of the harbor in between!"

"You shall be there within twenty-four hours," promised Chester.

"I was a very handsome girl in my Sicilian days," declared Eliza, with a wistful boldness, as she eyed the sketch; "but I don't suppose we can turn back the hands of the clock, can we?"

"What need to?" asked Chester, who fully appreciated the value of Eliza as a subject.

They did not stop with Palermo. Eliza appeared —in her black dress and her white hair—as the central figure in a "Battle of Flowers" at Nice; in a sumptuous gondola at an evening fête on the Grand Canal at Venice, the rain having deprived her of this forty years before; and also among the ruins of the temples at Selinunte, from which excursion rumors of brigandage had deterred her in the same old days. Chester put his high artistic principles in his pocket; he trimmed a little, compromised a little, "fudged" and juggled a little, and felt himself justified in doing so.

The portrait in oil followed. It made Eliza a

magnificent old lady, as indeed she was, and she made the painter a magnificent acknowledgment of his sympathy and skill, as she could easily afford to do. The canvas was put on exhibition the day before Mabel arrived, and it served to give the girl her second impression—following the concert. Mabel thought her aunt showed forth as a tremendously fine old personage, but betrayed not the slightest apprehension of the artistic qualities of the work. However, confident of her own good looks, she asked Chester to do her portrait, too; and this brusque demand he was fain to construe as a compliment.

"What do you think of her?" he asked Flagg, after their parting from Mabel at the gallery.

"I'm afraid she is another of them."

"Another what?"

"Another Philistine. Dart's one—passively. Miss Mills is another—actively. And I expect to find Miss Mabel a third—aggressively. Thank Heaven, we are here to deliver poor old Miss Eliza from such a band!"

The whole boarding-house knew that Clement Flagg had dedicated "Fredegunde" to Miss Hepburn—there was a copy of the score on the public piano—and the whole boarding-house, knowing Chester for a friend of Flagg's, had gone in a body to see the portrait on a free Sunday.

"Well, of all the outrageously flattering things!" exclaimed the type-writer of the party, shrugging her shoulders.

But the young woman was wrong. The costume, surely, was authentic, and the color no less so; for Eliza, by some miracle, had kept her complexion, just as her fine old piano, by another, had kept its timbre. Nor did this unfriendly critic realize another thing: that Eliza, after a hiatus of more than a generation, had resumed life just where she had dropped it—in an opera-box. For it was in the box at the Pergola that she and young Julian had parted. A good many people had envied him as he leaned over her from behind, but Eliza had pitied him as he went out. She recalled him after all these years: hopeful, handsome, promising, and divided—he always remained so—between music and painting. And now, at last, her imagination, under the spur of the youth and hope and promise that surrounded her, was ready to work upon him and upon her younger self. He was no longer living; he died old and worn and disappointed, the failure that she had secretly felt he must of necessity be: but she could not realize him as gone. They might still stroll again round the great fountain-basin of the Cascine; they might still loiter once more above the parapet of Bellosguardo. He lived yet; he passed her fan, he held her glass,

he sketched her portrait, he wrote her songs. "I am young still, and as handsome as ever," said Eliza, "and people shall see me at my best." So the portrait of the "rich old Miss Hepburn" was set before the public eye, and made its impression.

"Neck and neck," observed one of the stock-broker's clerks to Flagg at Monday morning's breakfast. "Don't let the other man get ahead of you."

Flagg nodded back with a careless smile, but he was inwardly offended, and felt that Chester, at such a speech, would have been offended still more. Neither of them, certainly, would have confessed to himself that his attentions to Eliza Hepburn had the flavor of ulterior expectations; but both of them seemed presently prompted by an instinctive feeling that if attentions were to go beyond a certain mark it were well to address them to the niece rather than to the aunt. Better, after all, to reach the elder lady by a sort of secondary impact; Mabel, at the worst, would serve as a buffer.

They resolved, therefore, not to be too hasty in condemning her as a Philistine. Surely such a bounding young beauty might have much to say in her own behalf. However, Mabel went on declaring herself with a clearness more and more unmistakable; her likes and her dislikes, her traits and her limitations, became plainer with every passing day. Music, paint-

ing, and sculpture in their higher forms she utterly rejected; literature she pitched out of doors, neck and crop. Dancing she accepted gladly, and Eliza's drawing-room rang with her two-steps and waltzes. The more tawdry manifestations of the drama alone found favor in her eyes, and she had a special leaning toward the skirt-dancers and acrobatic clowns of vaudeville. She shopped voraciously. She rushed to horse shows and to golf-courses; she climbed crazily upon coaches, and pushed abroad her inquiries after saddle-horses. She gravitated, and willingly enough, into the hands of Hugh Dart. He had her indifference to the arts and her fondness for out-of-door sports. They went off together to golf-links, and rode together in the parks, and attended farce comedies at this theatre and that.

"You're worth the two of them together a dozen times over," she told Dart one day.

"Thank you," replied Dart, with grave composure.

Flagg and Chester, for their part, looked upon Mabel as brutally disdainful of the best things of civilization, and as shamefully ignorant of the ways in which civilization had come about.

"Poor child!" said Flagg; "she doesn't know the road that brought her here. She has no idea of the labor involved for those who built it."

And both resolved, each one within himself, to redouble his efforts against the quiet but steady advances of that stiff and sapless prig, Hugh Dart.

VIII

THE course of events soon favored them. The series of autumnal diversions that Dart was offering Mabel Hepburn presently came to an abrupt end. The mails brought letters to the office of the estate; Dart, in turn, brought them to the house, and consultations followed in the sombre old library—consultations during which Eliza would knit her fine black brows in perplexity, and snap her finger-nails against each other from pure nervousness and apprehension, while Dart would assure her in his low, grave voice that she was unnecessarily perturbed, and that everything would easily come right in the end. Then he had packed his valise and had gone off on a ten days' trip, to run up a little charge of railroad fares, hotel bills, and court costs for the estate to foot. Mabel was left to strum her two-steps on the piano, and to beat pensive tattoos upon the front window-panes, as she wondered if the postman, on his next round, would do anything for her.

Eliza ignored the tattoos, but she gave full welcome to the glad rush of the two-step. The barbaric tram-

plings of this child of nature pleased her rather than otherwise; it was youth that she and her house wanted more than all else, and she was disposed to let it have its fling, unmindful, for the present, of the finer issues. "We shall trim her down in due time," thought Eliza.

Meanwhile Flagg and Chester stepped in to hasten the process. Both were far behind Dart in command of social opportunities and of the coin of the realm. Neither was able, even through the offices of fortunate and kindly acquaintances, to rumble with Mabel through the crowded town to the discordant trumpetings of noisy grooms, or to lounge by her side in a red coat over gashed and excoriated meadows. There was little within the reach of these unknown and humble youths save the theatre, the picture-gallery, and the exercise of their respective arts.

But Mabel still looked upon them with more curiosity than esteem. Nor did their works fully commend themselves in her eyes. She made unpleasant comparisons between Chester's Calabrian sketches and certain gaudy buttes in Montana. She followed Flagg's musical versions from Tennyson as long as she might mark time with her foot; that point once passed, she would remove the volume from the piano-rack and refuse further attention.

"Shall I put my pride in my pocket?" thought the one youth.

"Must I lapse away from my principles?" thought the other.

Chester fell to the mere level of pen-and-ink caricature—to little avail, since he had no gift for satire, and Mabel small sense of humor. Flagg, who had thrown over his German training, traditions, and repertory to delight Eliza with Donizetti, sank still lower. He began to grovel among the "popular songs of the day"—the mudsills of music—to please her niece. More, he parodied his idols—Bach, Händel, Mozart; but Mabel was not well enough informed to appreciate these humors, and they ceased.

"The arts and crafts must retire," declared Chester.

"And the pomps and vanities must take their place," supplemented Flagg.

So Mabel, with no close scrutiny of the motives involved, was invited to the chrysanthemum show.

Flagg, who called for her, found her beating her tattoo upon the window-pane. As he came in she slipped a letter back into its envelope and hastily thrust both into her pocket. The letter was from Dart—not the first from him, nor destined to be the last.

"Hope I'm not late," said Flagg. "I shouldn't like to keep Chester waiting there."

"I don't believe you're late. What time is it, anyway?" Mabel glanced at the clock. Time had been standing still with her for the last quarter of an hour.

They passed out into the street and told off a block or two.

"Here's where we turn," declared Flagg, at a corner.

"Do we? Which way?"

"To the right, for the flower show. To the left, for a bigger and better one."

"A bigger and better one? Where is it?"

"In the park itself—the autumn foliage, the blue dome of heaven, and the fall hats."

"That sounds very well," said Mabel. "The air's nice, isn't it? Good day for walking."

"We might stroll about a little first. Still, there's poor Chester waiting just inside, by the catalogue-girl's desk."

"Perhaps he could talk to her for a while. Think he would?"

"I'm afraid not; I know he wouldn't."

"So do I. He's too quiet and serious. Very nice fellow, though; I've quite come to like him."

"Well, shall we make it the park?" asked Flagg.

"Suppose we do," assented Mabel. She inflated her tan-colored jacket with a deep breath. "Just the afternoon for a walk."

"Chester will think me an out-and-out traitor," hesitated Flagg, turning to the left.

"Oh, *that* will be all right," said Mabel serenely. "Don't feel uneasy," she added, falling in with his step.

"*You* don't think it's an unfair advantage?"

"Not a bit," declared Mabel plumply. "It won't make the—the slightest difference."

"I like that."

"You wouldn't have me making both of you uncomfortable?"

"Uncertainty is uncomfortable," said Flagg darkly.

"So it is. Poor Austin Chester! But it won't last long."

Flagg cut at a passing lamp-post with his stick. "It wouldn't if the public recognized one's gifts. One may wait and wait, and——"

"Why wait? Take a step. Compel them to recognize you."

"Compel people to be pleased?"

"Why want to please, anyway? Serve. Be useful. Don't beg a reward. Earn it; exact it!"

"Don't be the strolling player on the king's highway, you would say; be the highwayman himself."

"Yes. Hold them up. Don't beg of them; go through them!"

"You don't understand the artist!"

"But I have a good eye for a man. I know one the minute I see him."

"You've been seeing one lately?"

"I think so—thanks to Aunt Eliza."

"No highwayman, I hope?"

"Not at all," returned Mabel emphatically. "Anyway, not one that will ever hurt *her*."

"You have her assurance?"

"Yes, I have. Aunt Eliza and I understand each other very well."

Flagg considered. "You are a lucky girl," he said at last.

"I'm beginning to think so."

"Only beginning?"

"Well, I can keep it up—I can go on with it."

"There will be other things to thank your stars for, then?"

"I hope so; I expect so."

They clicked over the flags of another crossing.

"Well, there's the park, just ahead," the young man observed. "Shall we go on for the fall foliage and the fall hats, or——?"

"Or back for the chrysanthemums? That would be fairer."

"You mean to hold the even scale?"

"Why not?"

"You are conscientious."

"I hope so. Aunt Eliza doesn't think any differently. Come, let's turn back; we mustn't keep that poor boy waiting."

"And fortunate, too."

"Well, we have our ups and downs. Take them as they come. Rather a nice thing, though, to be up again to stay there."

"Yes; to have your bread cut and buttered for all time."

"Um—h'm; and to have somebody to put away the crusts and brush up the crumbs and look after the crockery. Nothing like a good butler. Only think of Oliver. Does he keep the accounts, too, in some little book or other?"

"Miss Mills does that."

"Miss Mills," repeated Mabel with a grimace. "She doesn't quite like me. But never mind; housekeepers are easily come by. A nice, good office man and cashier is rarer," she went on, audaciously playing with her idea. "Only, you can't keep accounts with a paint-brush, nor on sheets of music-paper. Now, can you?"

"I presume not," said Flagg, much piqued.

"Get the right fellow," the girl resumed, "and set him down at his desk with his books and his pen and ink, and up he shoots before your very eyes: steward,

agent, general manager, interest in the business, full partner, and, to finish with, Boss—with a big B."

"You don't want a—a boss, do you?"

"Yes, I do. I need one, don't I?"

"Perhaps you do."

"Well, I've got one in mind. It must be somebody who is rather quiet, but very firm. He will say, in a low tone, 'Mabel, drop it!' and Mabel will drop it —quick. Or, 'Mabel, come running!' and Mabel will come running—as fast as ever she can. Of course she wouldn't come running for everybody—not for you, to make an instance. Well,"—pointing to a florid façade a few hundred feet down the street—"is that your flower-show—traitor?"

"Um," replied Flagg sulkily.

"He won't be there now; but we can say we looked for him."

Chester was not there, nor did he appear until the following Sunday, when he came in for tea. Sunday evening tea was now a fixed feast, at which each member of the little circle was expected to be present. Dart was the only absentee, and the restlessness both of Eliza and of her niece indicated that though out of sight he was not out of mind. As they rose from the table the door-bell rang, and his voice was heard in the hall.

Eliza rushed out to him in some trepidation.

"Is it all right—is everything settled?"

"Why, yes, of course. What was there to worry about?"

"Oh, Hugh, how good you are! How well you are looking after us!" She called him Hugh for the first time.

"What else am I for?" he asked composedly.

Mabel followed her aunt out into the hall, and remained there a few moments after Eliza's return to the drawing-room. She came back with Dart; she was openly very happy, and perfectly self-possessed withal.

Eliza sidled up to Mabel, and repeated her inquiry in a whisper.

"Is it all right—is everything settled?"

Mabel gave her answer with all the precision of a countersign.

"Why, yes, of course. What was there to worry about?"

For the next half-hour Eliza beamed and nodded and fluttered and whispered. She felt herself in the heart of a veritable romance and found it hard to keep still. Flagg and Chester looked at her in some curiosity; Agatha Mills, none too content, glowered from the shadow of the big lamp-shade.

"Let me tell them!" cried Eliza at last.

"Certainly," said Mabel.

"Why so much haste?" mumbled Dart, who never asked for a general sympathetic participation in his affairs.

"Let me," insisted Eliza. "Listen, everybody. Hugh and Mabel are going to be married, and they are going abroad on their wedding-trip, and they have promised to let me go along with them! We sail for Genoa in a month."

IX

"I'M afraid that's the last bell," said Dart. He leaned on the port rail close beside his wife, and slightly apart from Eliza and the two young men. Agatha Mills, casting back a Parthian glance at the treacherous Dart, had left the ship a few moments before, with Oliver, who had put her into a cab and started her back to the house, where she was to have the consolation of holding sway, with no further infraction of the *status quo*, until the return of Eliza in the spring. Dart had addressed his observation to Chester and Flagg, and appeared quite willing that they should follow Agatha ashore without the further loss of a second.

But Eliza detained them at the head of the gangplank, and let escaping landsmen jar and jostle as they would. The mild sunshine of an early December

afternoon illumined the deck; but Eliza, burning with her own enthusiasm, irradiated a glow that paled the half-hearted sun completely. The corona of expectancy hovered above her head; Italy was visibly beckoning and welcoming a returning child. The old woman's being sang like a harp; airs from Posilipo and Val d'Arno were already playing upon her; and in her eye there shone the recurring possibility of an extravagance that were better given rein abroad than at home. Dart stood at her side, a grave angel of guardianship and restraint. Mabel, with her hand on his arm, was radiantly happy, as became a two days' bride—not over Italy, which meant no more than any other new land, but over the prospect of change and excitement experienced *à deux*. But Eliza was more than happy, she was triumphant; her lamp was trimmed and burning, and she awaited with impatience the glad cry of the parable, aware that the oil held on high within her shining vessel was plentiful and pure.

"And now, my dear boys, good-by! I owe this entirely to you. Write to me; I shall write to you both. And come to see me as soon as I get back."

Eliza shifted a big bunch of red roses from one hand to the other and gave each of the young men a hearty shake. These flowers had originally been in two bunches, just alike; but Eliza had unconsciously

merged them in one. Flagg had noticed this, and had shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," he said to his companion, as they stood on the pier and watched the steamer swing out into the stream, "am I I? Are you you? Are we distinct beings? No; she has fused us just as she mingled our flowers—you noticed? And she is going to write, not to each of us, but to 'both' of us. We shall hear from her on the same sheet of paper; she will put 'both' of our names on one envelope. I don't understand it; I don't like it."

"I am glad she is gone," said Chester thoughtfully. "It is an escape for both of us. There were days when I felt the strain. I was—I was jealous when you were giving that concert."

"And I suffered while you were painting that portrait."

"Perhaps our principles were beginning to suffer, too. How about that chrysanthemum afternoon?—never fully accounted for," insinuated Chester.

"Never mind; it matters nothing now," rejoined Flagg.

"We have both abased ourselves, and uselessly," pursued the other. "I shall go in for a strict course of *plein air;* I shall leave Tyrrhenian fantasias alone."

"And I shall return to the Germans, where I belong; I shall forswear even Boito and Giordano."

"She will be happy over there?" asked Chester, in a tone of speculation.

"She has my best wishes," conceded Flagg. "She may certainly be busy enough," he added.

"Busy?"

"Yes. With Europe to aid her, she might try to civilize Mabel and to humanize Dart."

Chester ignored this bitter speech. He looked after the wake of the receding steamer and the black plume of smoke that was beginning to streak the sky.

"Well, there she goes—she whom we were to deliver out of the hands of the Philistines."

"Ha!" said Flagg, turning on his heel; "and, after all, it is the Philistines who have come along and delivered her out of the hands of the Elect!"

ADDOLORATA'S INTERVENTION

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I

(FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARCELLUS BLAND)

PALERMO, *February* 10, 1903.

ALBERT JORDAN has arrived. I was strolling this forenoon along the Marina when the launch from the Villa Rosalia came sputtering across the harbor and set down a number of people near the Porta Felice, Jordan among them. I recognized him at once, though he was somewhat changed; and he, though rather less promptly, recognized me. He did not detach himself from his little party, nor pause on his way into the town; so there was no exchange of verbal greetings. He appeared as composed, as self-centred, as ever, despite a certain effervescent hilarity among his associates. Indeed, I think I may say, without any imaginative excess, that he was even a bit subdued and chastened; something not to be wondered at after last autumn's *peripezía*—a change of fortune, if ever there was one. The sum total of his presence—a mere passing presence, true—was this: he seemed to be saying, with his odd air of quiet

determination: "No, you shall never know me better; give up any such idea for once and for all."

The conduct of this young man begins to irritate me. He is just as baffling in Sicily as he was on Broadway—and just as ungrateful. Ungrateful, I say; and here is my case. I was one of the first to welcome Jordan when, in all his rawness, he came to town from his haunts "up State." I was among the earliest to recognize the talent in those impromptu newspaper sketches which he afterward got together in book form. I perseveringly praised to the sceptical the first-fruits of his acquaintance with the city, his "In the Crosstown Cars," though Heaven knows I am chary enough about giving approval to the ephemeral stuff of the daily prints. When he adventurously invaded the theatre with a drama founded upon his rural observations and experiences, nobody was more friendly than I to "Fudgetown Folks." Later, I was one of the vociferous crowd at the Walpole that started "Boys Will Be Boys" on its two-year run; and when, last fall, the reaction came and "Youth Must Have Its Fling" was smiled pityingly from the boards and the gallant young career seemed over, I strained my credit to make the confident, half-studied thing appear at least a *succès d'estime.* Why, I have written reviews of the fellow's doings—a practice I rarely condescend to; and I have sent

him congratulatory notes and telegrams which were not only enthusiastic but effusive. And what in return? I am snubbed. No, not snubbed; I retract the word, for no one has ever snubbed me, and no one ever can. But the sort of treatment meted out to me is only one degree better: I am held at arm's length; I get—when escape is impossible for him—a single perfunctory word; and I must content myself—here in foreign parts, where national consciousness and local ties sometimes turn even antipathies into attachments—with a cool nod and the present view of a highly indifferent back.

Does he not know who I am? Does he not realize what I stand for? Does he not comprehend what value a word of praise from me may have? Has he never read "Etrurian Byways"? Has he never heard of "The Grand Master" or of "Emir and Troubadour"? I am, indeed, no national celebrity, no household word, as he is; I have never seen my name lettered in fire before three Broadway theatres at once; nor have I a "farm" in Connecticut that has been celebrated by half the writers of "specials" in town; but I do enjoy, all the same, a reputation of my own among the few whose good opinion is worth the winning. Though I have nearly forgotten the meaning of the term "royalty," while his annual income amounts to figures that are almost fabulous,

I would not consider, for a moment, an exchange of place and fortune.

I say this despite the obvious failure of "The Grand Master." But why should I employ the words "obvious" and "failure"? For the book no more reached the public consciousness than a snowflake falling into Vesuvius reaches the earth. "Youth Must Have Its Fling," on the contrary, did fail—spectacularly, resonantly. After its first grand flare it flickered before diminishing hundreds for a fortnight, and then it flickered out. Its passing was notorious. They knew about it in Syracuse and Detroit and Atlanta and Denver. The daily papers had their gibes about it; weeklies with "theatrical departments" gave it a cut as it hastened down the dark corridor of failure; and long afterward belated monthlies were busily explaining why the wreck had come about and acutely speculating on the dazed young author's future. Never before such buffets on so confident and smiling a face. Our young author fled the country—to study, far from the scene, the cause and nature of his *débâcle* and to take counsel with himself as to his career. A moving situation for thirty-three.

I suppose his lighting upon quiet Palermo must be held to be purely fortuitous. Neither his tastes nor his traditions can have assisted him in making so luminous a choice of an asylum. I should have

expected him to stop short at Naples or to go on to Cairo. In my own case, however, there seemed no great choice. Rome being ruined, and Naples detestable, and Algiers quite second rate, and Cairo both too far away and much too expensive, what other town was left for one who would be at once in the midst of things and yet somewhat aside from them? Such at least is my feeling at the Albergo della Marina; a little shabby, a trifle dingy, and altogether in the past tense, it is perhaps the best that an unsuccessful novelist may aspire to. How things may seem at the Grand Hotel Villa Rosalia I have no means of knowing; probably all the pomp and circumstance that enwraps the cosmopolitan tourist may help to make even a youth under the passing shade of failure feel that he is still in the world and of it. One can scarcely, I apprehend, sojourn at the Villa Rosalia and yet confess that the pride of life has been altogether renounced; whereas a man housed in a cell at the Marina——But let me not abuse the roof that shelters me.

Yes, Albert at the landing-stage was cursory and nonchalant past all endurance. Why should it be so difficult for me to put myself *en rapport* with him? His life is public to a degree—thousands of Toms, Dicks, and Harrys share in it with all freedom. I have been kind, I have been interested, I have been enthu-

siastic, I have been articulate; and I am but nine years older—a gap that might easily be bridged, if any gap at all can be held to be made by so slight a difference.

Privately—very privately—I fear that Jordan looks upon me as an amateur, and that in his clear young gray eyes the opinion of an amateur has no value whatever. He regards me as a *dilettante;* so, always, to the trained craftsman must appear one who follows an art on the basis of some private competency, however small. Jordan, on the contrary, has his "trade," and has used it to fight his way up to his present position. Those years in the Herkimer County newspaper office must have been of the greatest service to him. To recognize the idea when it comes; to realize its values and its possibilities; to deal with it competently, cleanly, unfalteringly, and at the first essay—all this is very fine; and all this, with more, is plain on every page of "From the Back Counties," and is none the less apparent in his intimate studies of middle-class realism in the life of the metropolis itself. Fluency and precision show in the very preparation of his manuscripts. Once, in the *Recorder* building, I passed his door; a few pages of "copy" for the morrow's sketch lay in plain sight on his desk. Trim, clean-cut, unblotted, they represented well the craftsman in his absence. Does any one imagine that the author of "Etrurian Byways" would dare leave ex-

posed a sheet or two of his manuscript for the inspection of the casual passer-by? Never! Yes, I see: Albert Jordan looks upon me as an amateur, and of my reiterated compliments and congratulations he makes no account whatever.

Another thought. Jordan cannot but be proudly aware of his firm grip on present-day actualities. To him, ever welcoming the stinging impact of life as it is lived, my doings must appear tenuous, derivative, remote. Of course those character illustrations of Snow's helped his first book greatly; still, it would have stood without them—the rustic oddities of Herkimer County could have been depended upon to speak shrilly and shrewdly for themselves. To one who is so sure-footed both on the old Pike Road and in East Fourteenth Street, of what possible interest are loiterings through the byways of Etruria or the back lanes of Malta? No; Jordan taxes me for my lack of vividness and vitality and properly scorns me.

Yet again. What are a few thin and inconspicuous books compared with a reverberating succession of plays? I have timidly looked over the hedge, while he has boldly held the highway. I have scotched my dozens, while he has slain his thousands. He has battled for big stakes in one of the great arenas of the world, and scoffs at me for a faint-hearted slinker through unregarded by-paths. But why proceed?

He can care nothing for my opinion, nothing for my approval. Drop, my pen; close, my little book; I have answered my own weak question over and over again.

II

(FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALBERT JORDAN)

GRAND HOTEL VILLA ROSALIA.
PALERMO, *February* 11, 1903.

. . . I AM well enough placed here and shall probably remain until along into March. I might have chosen Florence or Cairo, perhaps; but at present—as you can very well understand, my dear Arthur—I am in no mood to encounter the Anglo-Saxon world wholesale. In Sicily the cosmopolitan blend seems a little more perfect; one is not trampled down by a mob composed of one's fellow-countrymen exclusively.

Let us dispense with description; I cannot endure to pen it, nor you to read it. For an idea of my present surroundings consult my letter-head. The Villa supplies a better class of stationery, without any Earthly Paradise above the date-line; but sometimes one's second-class manner is more graphic and successful than one's first.

Is it, though? That is precisely the point I have

settled down to consider. But no more of that just now.

Well, gather in for yourself, old fellow, the mountains and the sea and the subtropical flora. And add if you like, a tennis-court, something of a golf-course, a steam-yacht, an electric omnibus, an orchestra for dinner, and St. Rosalia herself somewhere up in the mountain behind.

Am sorry to hear so unfavorably from the sheep. I thought sheep, if anything, could be depended upon to pick up their living from those Connecticut bowlders. Let us worry them through the winter as best we may, and next year I will try Holsteins or Jerseys. Thanks for your good report about the beaver dam. There's one fad, at least, that is self-supporting.

Beaton's last week's check came yesterday; also the Thespian for the 25th. Ask B. if he hasn't overlooked those two dates at Terre Haute.

If old Murdock is ready to part with that twenty-acre tract to the north-east, don't let me lose it. Stanhope may go on enlarging the terrace, but any more nonsense about foundations is quite superfluous in such a rock-ribbed region. Am glad to hear that that fly-by-night company down in Kentucky has been nipped. But I want an example made of them—have them followed up sharp. Forgive all these particulars; you understand that the most I

ask you to do is to pass on the word to the right quarter.

Marcellus Bland is here; I think I heard you praising one of his books last spring. I passed him yesterday in the town. He looked as if his foot was on its native heath indeed. I was with a troup of roistering young Yanks, male and female; they attend me in all my walks and treat me like a fellow-kid. If they want to be disagreeable they treat me like a fellow-kid who has just slipped up on the ice. Well, no more of that; a man may rise again, I hope. I never realized before how uproarious my younger compatriots abroad may be, nor how disadvantageous it might turn out to have made myself the public limner and apologist of and for—oh, mercy, prepositions *are* tough!—their antics. Bland looked a shade scornful, and I don't blame him.

Still, I should have clapped on a few more years and broken from the ranks to greet him if he had been alone, for he has been rather civil to me (in his own peculiar lofty way) on more occasions than one. But he wasn't alone. An intense young woman with large dark eyes and a considerable overplus of "soul" was with him, and she looked immensely like one I met at your musicale in November, where she was busily watching out for chances to frown distressfully at the slips of your performers. If she is the seemingly

slender creature of good height with whom I sat for a few moments in your dusky bower, and if she is as intense in Palermo as she was in West Eightieth Street, I shall hesitate about meeting her a second time. For in answer to my simple inquiry as to what she thought of Filkins's "Lady Rosamund Risks It," *the* success of the season, she affected not to know who I was and coolly replied that she had no money to squander on the commercial drama! That ended Little Bertie.

Well, she may appreciate Bland. Indeed, I saw at a glance that she was an "admirer"; nay, more—as we say in real literature—a "worshipper." H'm! you know what I think of admirers and worshippers: the art-life—do you get that, my boy?—the art-life, I say, would be much more comfortable without them. When the admirers are arranged by the hundreds in the orchestra-chairs at two dollars per, it isn't so bad; but to have a single admirer come up softly and touch your coat-sleeve with her forefinger and say, "You're it!" might test the nerve of the strongest.

Such, I thought, was the situation in front of the Porta Felice, or whatever they call it; so I moved steadily past, with my whole train of co-educational hoodlums—*quorum pars fui*. I know *that* much Latin, even if I didn't get more'n two-thirds through high

school. I say I should have liked—I mean, I should like to have—no, I should have liked, just as I had it at first. I should have liked, I say, to stop and do the civil with Bland; but though I say it I don't quite mean it. You were always urging me to be friendly with him, you incorrigible "genial," but there was one thing about him you never realized, and that's this:

The fellow has two standards—one for himself and the other for me. When he wrings my hand and tells me how clever my last newspaper sketch is, or when he despatches a note to assure me how magnificently I have done on the boards, there is always present that damnable thing called, styled, and entitled the *arrière pensée*—more high school. Everything is all very clever and magnificent and racy and redolent and characterful and *patati* and *patata* (oh, how I am swimming along!)—considering. Considering what? Considering that I am an up-State jay whose only *alma mater* was a country newspaper office; considering that I never lingered for several years, as he did, in some academic New England grove and never had, as he had, any of the further advantages of travel and study abroad; considering that I couldn't distinguish Pontormo from pudding-stone or tell a biography of Guidarello Guidarelli from a treatise on double-entry bookkeeping. Yes, the warm pressure of Bland's palm, or the warmer imprint of

his device on a small dab of sealing-wax, may assure me that I am racy, sincere, authentic, national, realistic, what you will—but a rail-fence hayseed, all the same. Now, am I going to thank a man very heartily for such praise as that? Let him judge me by his own standards, as applied to himself, and I will reciprocate as warmly as you please.

One more point while I am wound up. Such gilt-edged encomiums from a man who is only seven or eight years my senior savor of patronage. The circumstances don't justify them. True, he got in on the ground-floor of the Temple of Art—do you get the capitals, dear old man?—a little before I did, but not so very long before; just about long enough to thrust his arms out and seem to be helping me in. Why, I was climbing in all right *without* any help! I was sweeping along and getting a thousand hands where he was getting one. There, now!

The proportion hasn't changed much since then—that's another point to remember. If I went about boasting of the good opinion of Marcellus Bland, dozens of fellows would say, "Who the deuce *is* Marcellus Bland?" How far would Bland's name carry on upper Broadway? Half across the sidewalk? Well, perhaps so; but not much farther. Whereas, mine——But you have read it there by the month, and you shall read it there again, be sure.

Well, let's dispense with shop—at least, with that particular kind of shop. This hotel is full of all sorts of human odds and ends. I can't make much of them, but Bland could. The town itself, too, seems packed with every variety of interesting stuff. I can't make much of that, either, but Bland is doubtless putting it all to good use. Among other rarities here at our Villa we have little Maribel Blennerhassett, some of whose people you met at Ardsley. Maribel is *my* admirer—every man has his cross. Maribel broke out of school last June, but she is still at the college-pin stage, and she is always harrying me about the sole college man I ever allowed to get before the footlights. Two or three of the genus are at large in Santa Rosalia's domain, and now and then we catch one for purposes of comparison. Maribel is always trying to make "'Squab' Madison" square with them, and when he won't then they have to square with him. Maribel is loyal but wearing. If she doesn't soon go to Tunis, as she talks of doing, I shall have to switch her off on to somebody else.

If you meet the Prestons—either Senior or Junior—tell them I find the "Back Counties" everywhere, and remind them—genteelly—that they are getting more out of its lasting old frame than I am. There, now, is a book the world will not willingly let die. I found a copy in the hotel at Brussels, and one at Cannes,

and one at Perugia, and there are two here. (I say nothing about the Vallombrosan effect they produced on the promenade-deck of the *Cyclonic*.) Little Maribel loves the "Back Counties" as much as anybody else does. Only yesterday I saw her offering one of the Santa Rosalia copies to an elderly Florentine and explaining to him in her own sweet way (or so I guessed) what a great man I was. He restored the volume early this morning with the sole remark that it was "curious." Once or twice during the day he has looked at me, oh, so dubiously!—as if he thought that I were curious, too. Not a bit pleasant, my dear Arthur. You see one may have a vast currency in a particular field and none whatever outside it. Bland, I fancy, might have fared better at the elderly student's hands. But of course our up-State dialect was never meant for the Tuscans.

However, I must not run on indefinitely. If I write long letters it is because I am not yet in the mood for any other kind of writing. I have had a bad jolt, I acknowledge, and I haven't quite yet begun to find myself. Try to let me know, when you reply, just how I stand with regard to club dues—a subject that has grown much too complicated for me to keep in my head. I have written Selden that positively not more than twenty-five thousand must go into those Iowa farm mortgages. Above all, be

sure that everything is done to exact a penalty from those pirates in Kentucky.

Yours, as ever,

A. J.

III

(FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARCELLUS BLAND)

PALERMO, *February* 13.

I RESUME my diary. The reading public may have conspired to immure me in the Tower of Silence, but between the covers of this faithful repository I shall be as articulate as I please. After all, the best things are often accomplished in quiet and with no thought of fame.

To-day I walked out again with Miss Matthews —this time in the Villa Giulia and the Botanical Garden. An intense young person who takes her Italy in the most poignant fashion; it was all quite like a visit from one's earlier self. Miss Matthews, as I make it out, comes from somewhere up the river—from Peekskill or Newburgh; being, in some sense, a suburbanite, she is even more metropolitan than the metropolis. And having put much of her abundant and eventless leisure into study, she is more cultivated than Culture in Culture's most cultivated moments. She seems devoted, heart and soul, to the Peninsula;

she is so completely Italianate as to call herself "Addolorata." If she has pushed her devotion too far she has not gone unpunished. For there is often at her elbow an elderly commonplace person, with thin hair and a plaid shawl, who plaintively calls her "Addie."

Miss Matthews's attitude toward me is most appreciative and deferential. I am certain, therefore that she hails from the background. The sincerest worshippers are ever those simple folk who stand just within the church doorway. The "quality," whom the luxurious *prie-dieu* draws nearer to the chancel, take a calmer and more worldly view; while for a perfectly hardened and cynical estimate of the whole situation commend me to those practised creatures who serve the altar itself. Yes, Addolorata Matthews is doubtless from Peekskill.

As we sauntered down the avenue of date-palms she began to quote the "Etrurian Byways" to me, and she told me that she had selected a passage from it to preface a book of travel, written by a very intimate friend of hers.

"Dear, dear!" I said, half in dismay.

"You are not displeased?" she asked, opening her brown eyes to their widest.

"N—no," I replied; "only I am pretty certain it was some passage that would have been improved

by a recasting and by a closer study of its punctuation."

"I found no fault in it," she returned promptly. "It was that beautiful page about Cervetri and Castel d'Asso and the Fanum Voltumnæ. Cervetri," she went on,—"that is one of the places I have longed to see for years. Heaven knows when I shall finally reach it. Those tombs! oh, those tombs!"

"I remember," I said gloomily. "It would have been better if I had used dashes instead of parentheses."

"When were you there?" she demanded eagerly. "At Cervetri?"

"Yes."

"Why, I have never been there at all—as yet."

"Never been there at all? And Castel d'Asso, then? And Norchia? And Toscanella? And——"

"Well, some of them I have visited, and some of them I haven't. Intuition, my dear young woman—invention—imagination."

But my dear young woman looked at me very doubtfully. Therefore——

"If I have a *feeling* for a place," I asked, "must I visit that place and have my feeling compromised by facts?"

She made no reply, but bowed over the waxy red blossoms of a thorny euphorbia. I saw that she was

disappointed and grieved. I had also given away quite unnecessarily the secrets of the shop. Therefore——

"Drop the 'Etrurian Byways,'" I said, a bit tartly, "and read 'From the Back Counties.'"

"What!" she cried, with some sharpness; "that thing by Albert What's-his-name?"

"Albert Jordan—precisely. That 'thing' is a good thing, and I'm glad you know it."

"I don't. I have found it lying about in every hotel I have visited, but I haven't once looked inside its covers. I make it a matter of principle never to read such stuff!"

"Stuff? Let me assure you that Jordan's 'stuff' is every bit as good, in its own way, as mine. And you might visit many and many a hotel, even in Italy itself, without finding a single copy of the 'Byways.'"

"I don't need to find a copy. I have my own. And I have given away a dozen others. Only—it disappoints me—to——"

"To find me describing what I don't know anything about? Well, you won't find that weakness in Jordan. He is genuine throughout. Come, read him. There is a copy of the 'Back Counties' in the *sala* of the Marina itself."

"No doubt—no doubt!"

"Nothing can beat him in the rendering of familiar things observed at first hand. Nobody can surpass

him in the qualities that appeal to the normal man. He is so sane and hearty; he is so fully documented, so completely in sympathy with all the humors and oddities of his native region——"

"And doubtless as scraggly and formless as the society he depicts."

"Not at all. That's the wonder of it. He's as trim as you please. He's as clear as a bell, as clean-cut as a diamond, as exact and rigorous in form as—as anybody I know. His forms are of his own devising, true, but they suit his matter to a 't.' In fact, I often read him *for* his form after my interest in the mere matter has become rather dulled."

"Is his form any more clean-cut than the form of 'The Grand Master'?"

"Why, have you read 'The Grand Master'?" I cried in amaze. Nobody had referred to the fated book in my hearing for fully six months.

"I have read it three times. Or rather, I carry it about with me everywhere and read in it habitually. But tell me, why did you go to the Tyrol for your hero?"

"To put him in contrast with my Sicilian heroine. Besides, all the recent grand masters have come from the Tyrol—or, to be more exact, from the Trentino." A fact, that—if fact were wanted.

"But his name was Italian."

"In part—as many of the names of the south Austrians are."

"Guido Camillo——" she began.

"Yes," I cried; "Fra Guido Camillo Fürst von Hochwald und Hohenberg—what a splendid assemblage of syllables!" Oh, if you *will* talk to a man about his books select his latest—whether it be a success or a failure—his latest!

"And what a fine idea that Guido should have taken the vows! A man of mature age and devoted, by his very office, to celibacy; yet he falls in love with that charming little Contessina——"

"Contrast on contrast!" I cried enthusiastically. "He an Austrian; she an Italian. He middle-aged; she in her first youth. He bound by his vows; she free to choose and to adore—— Oh, what theme could more deliciously invite a light, decorative treatment that——"

"H'm!" she said, as she thoughtfully worked her foot once or twice over the gravel path. "A treatment less light and decorative might perhaps have been justified." Her tone had a tinge of discontent.

"Tell me," she asked again, after having smoothed down the gravel with a shining black toe, "have you visited the palace of the Order, in Rome?"

"In the Via Condotti? Yes."

"And the church of the Order, on the Aventine?"

"Santa Maria del Priorato? Well, I have paced off the ilex-path there and have seen the dome of St. Peter's through the key-hole of their garden gate, but I have never been inside the church itself."

"*I* have," she said reproachfully. "I attended there the funeral of the late grand master."

Wonderful creature! Going everywhere, knowing everything, exacting as much from others as from herself! To be the idol of such a worshipper must certainly be no sinecure. Might I but help her to find some other saint standing in some other niche!

She paused, and during the pause she looked at me most intently. Finally she spoke.

"Have you ever—have you ever——?" she began, and braced herself for a blow.

I knew what was coming. "Have you ever been to Malta?"—that was the question she was trying to ask, and the question she presently did ask.

"No," I was obliged to answer, and felt like an assassin.

"But Valetta," she faltered, "is full of their old 'auberges,' I hear; and the palace of the governor is hung with portraits of the grand masters; and the cathedral is set thick with their monuments; and the streets and ramparts are wrapped in memories of the old days when knight and Turk fought for mastery; and—and—I was going there next week, and——"

"And all on your account!" her eyes plainly said.

"Oh, heavens!" I groaned inwardly. This was worship indeed—worship of the most exigent description. Now, the saint—oh, nothing is truer!—ought to maintain the level of the faith itself, and I, alas, was pitifully falling far below it. What to do? I jumped down from my niche and rushed forth from the fane.

"Read Jordan!" I cried. "He knows every street in Fudgeville, and every house at Tompkins' Corners, and every pike throughout the length and breadth of good old Herkimer! Do homage—for he is in position to accept it; he is in Palermo, too."

She looked at me in some bewilderment. It seemed, furthermore, as if she were about to tax me with ingratitude.

"Yes," she said slowly; "I had an idea that that man at the Porta Felice might perhaps be he. I met him once, I think, in a half-lighted drawing-room. So," she went on, "that tall, slender young man with the cool, blue-gray eyes, and the broad square shoulders and the nice light-gray suit was Albert Jordan. Well, he looked civilized enough."

"He *is* civilized. Yes, his are the cool, blue-gray eyes and the broad square shoulders"—my own shoulders, I acknowledge, have become somewhat rounded and humpy. "Herkimer County is full of

such youths. They grow tall and slender and broad-shouldered and cool-eyed. And when they come down to town the light-gray suit is added unto them. Then, if a final perfection is required, a white camellia is added unto the button-hole of the light-gray suit. As in that case!"

And I waved my hand toward a cross-path, where a tall, slender young man with cool eyes and broad shoulders and a light-gray suit with a white camellia in the button-hole, was tiptoeing along with a cautious outlook over the adjacent shrubbery—Albert Jordan in his own person.

He was alone. There was no reason why he should not stop to speak as he reached us, and he did. He was perfectly civil, though not very cordial; and he referred whimsically to the retinue that had attended his steps on the occasion of our other encounter.

"I have escaped from the kindergarten—for a little," he said; "and if we don't speak too loud perhaps they won't catch me again." A juvenile clamor made itself heard from an adjoining alley, and we felt that he might be recaptured at any moment. "I am not a kid," he went on, "however much appearances may be against me. Try to regard me as a grown-up, please."

He straightened himself till he was half a head above either of us, and drew on the slow, sweet smile

that he always wears for his first-night curtain speeches. That smile never fails, and I saw that it was not to fail now. It immediately became clear that Addolorata Matthews was prepared at least to "endure." I felt that I should never again be taxed for my failure to visit Malta and blessed myself for my lavish praise of Jordan and all his works.

Fragments of a college cry now broke on our ears —a college cry of the most "fresh-water" character —and Jordan was presently claimed by his own. It was the same band of young people that had swarmed about him on the Marina—two or three youths pausing between Academe and Business, and a brace of tousle-headed young girls. The more vociferous of the latter was presented to me as Miss Blennerhassett.

"How do?" she half gasped, half panted, in an excessively cursory fashion, and at once turned back her attention to her youths—to Jordan himself first and foremost. It seemed to count for nothing with her untrained consciousness that it was she who had been presented to me, and not I to her. But there are those with whom no one—not even the best—can expect to stand as a personage.

Now there is a freemasonry among men, just as there is among women. Jordan gave me a glance. "Take this insufferable child off my hands," his eyes

plainly said. I liked that of Jordan. I felt that now at last the barriers had been swept away and that he was about to admit me as a friend—the inner chamber after the vestibule.

During our few remaining moments in the garden I did what I could to favor him, though the girl evidently had no knowledge of me or of my works, and no faintest shade of deference for me—nor, as it would appear, for anybody or anything else. However, I annexed Miss Maribel Blennerhassett and her young associates, while Jordan and Addolorata Matthews strolled along in our rear.

Is he disposed to render me a *quid pro quo?* That fine action would make us friends, indeed!

IV

(FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALBERT JORDAN)

PALERMO, *February* 19, 1903.

. . . STANHOPE may take his time over the plans for the enlarged terrace, but everything must be right. That south-east angle, my dear Arthur, should not fail to give me the best possible outlook on the Sound and to bring in the Long Island hills to the greatest advantage. The place is costing me big money, and I want all the landscape I can appropriate.

I went up to Monreale yesterday, on the track (though I talk like a fly) of a certain carved and painted ceiling. I found the thing rather mediocre both in design and execution; but it is old and authentic, and is touched with just a bit of Saracenic wildness, and I imagine I shall end by having it sent over for the drawing-room at Cobblestone Corners. I suppose I must trust to you to find somebody capable of putting it up.

While at Monreale I looked into the cathedral. It had to be done one time or another, and I thought I might as well do it and have it over with. Some sort of fête happened to be going on, and the big, cool place was trimmed sparsely with crimson hangings. Two or three of them would make first-rate curtains for my den. A few people were strolling about—among them that Miss Matthews you are always trying to have me appreciate. "Addolorata Matthews"—it doesn't sound quite right, does it? The two names don't seem to go together. Some time, when we get a little better acquainted, I'm going to ask her what her name really is. There's a good deal to the girl, I am ready to acknowledge; and that story-book appellation of hers must be just a bit of whimsey. But one may be guilty of almost any monkey-shine in this romantic region.

There was a parade of priests and choristers and

acolytes and all, and their reds gave the chill old cavern quite a touch of color; but somehow or other Miss Matthews and I got to talking and a good deal of the function went for nothing. She told me lots about the tremendous layout of mosaics overhead—a well-posted young woman, Arthur, if ever there was one. Left to myself, I never should have made head or tail of them, and I don't quite see even yet how I could use any of them in Connecticut; but she made it all mighty interesting and I came away a wiser and a better man. She also told me something about the music, which has a form and a procedure that a poor farm-hand from Herkimer could hardly have suspected. And then she did a little literature for me—oh, she put the daughter of Herodias nowhere! She talked about *my* literature—at last, at last! And her tone was the winsome tone of apology.

"My dear Mr. Jordan," she said, just as earnestly as you can think, "I am going to beg your pardon a hundred times over. I have been very unfair to you, and very prejudiced. But I have just finished reading 'From the Back Counties,' and I want to tell you how much I think of it. It is all so real, so honest, so earnest; yes, and so touching. I know you don't expect people to be very much affected by that christening in the Methodist meeting-house, but along toward the end I couldn't quite hold in a sob——"

However, you must know about what she said—so many others have said it. I just mention the sob because that part was sort o' new and different. I guess she meant it, too; anyway, she had a kind of little twitch to her mouth and a suspicion of moisture in her eye. And to think that I should have always considered her a piece of pure intellect!

Still, a very little moisture is enough—you know my theory about overdoing it. So, to secure the flood-gates, I said:

"This is a sudden conversion. Who brought it about?"

"Mr. Bland. He insisted that I should read you."

"Very friendly of him," I replied cautiously. "Very decent indeed."

"He *is* friendly to you. He has followed everything you have done, and has nothing but praise for all."

"My plays, too?"

"Yes."

"And when are you yourself going to do justice to *them?* Oh, I forgot; you don't encourage the 'commercial drama.'"

Was that a mean dig? Well, she passed it over grandly.

"I don't believe your plays can be 'commercial,' and I am going to begin to 'encourage' them as soon as I get back."

Rather nice and high-minded of her, wasn't it?

"Well," I said, "you will generally find some one or other of them running on Broadway. And the rest can be picked up—more or less mangled—in Michigan or Utah."

"I shall pick them up," she declared. Then, "Have you read anything of Mr. Bland's?" she asked me.

"Why, no, not exactly," I acknowledged. "But I have met a press notice now and then. I don't think I should quite fancy his things. Aren't they like the parade in this church—a small fire in a very large, cold room?"

"There's the 'Etrurian Byways,'" she submitted.

"They're a long way from here," I objected.

"There's 'The Grand Master,'" she proceeded. "That's nearer. At Malta."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Must I skip along to still another island?"

"Well, there's 'Emir and Troubadour.' That isn't his best book, but the scene is partly laid right here in Palermo. It's an historical romance, at the court of the Emperor Frederick the Second."

"I might look into this last, I suppose, if it's as instructive as that."

"A lady at my hotel has a copy, and I think I could borrow it for you."

She spoke with no particular enthusiasm, and I

surmised that what principally prompted her was a sense of fairness.

"Do so, by all means," I rejoined. "I am willing to do the right thing by Bland, since he has been so decent to me."

But you understand, dear Arthur, that I am not abroad for the purpose of plodding through historical novels. However, I disposed of the book in my best reviewing style—I read the opening chapter and the closing one and another from the middle. Then I turned it over to little Maribel Blennerhassett. Maribel isn't beyond the age for learning, and a trifle more knowledge won't do her a bit of harm. She is busy on the book now; she sits with it in the sun-parlor and hasn't made a pass at me for several hours. Bland is a pretty good sort, after all.

Upon leaving the cathedral we strolled about for a time. Noble views whichever way we turned—and you know I save the word "noble" for deserving occasions. The almond-trees were coming out, and from the hill-slope below the apse of the church—the apse, Arthur, is the round part at the back—the perfume of the orange-blossoms surged up tremendously. I don't generally care much for orange-blossoms, as you know; in fact, when I acted as usher for Johnny Frazer I should have stampeded if you hadn't tied me to the chancel-rail with a length

of that white satin ribbon. To-day, however, the odor was less disconcerting—perhaps our being in the open air made some difference.

"Addolorata" Matthews!—no, such an accordion-plaited name doesn't do. And the aged crone who circled about us at a discreet distance once came up and called her "Addie!"—and neither does that. Oh, me! oh, my! there must be some golden mean. What is it? You needn't take the trouble to cable, but don't forget that point next time you write.

Say, it was awfully fine of her to sob, wasn't it?

I am glad I am going to have all that extra room at Cobblestones. I begin to feel that I shall be able, before long, to rehabilitate myself in the public eye; and a thumping big house-party about Thanksgiving time is coming to loom up pretty large in my own.

Yours, as ever, A. J.

V

(THE MEDITATIONS OF ADDOLORATA MATTHEWS)

PALERMO, *February* 24, 1903.

No, I cannot look upon myself as a Purit n, else why should I have abandoned myself so completely to the ever-delightful South? Yet I have never so

far let go my hold upon the more serious realities as to accept grace for thoroughness or mere attractiveness for solidity. A work of art is best, no doubt, when it rises effortlessly from its conditions; yet it should rise, not as an exhalation from the water, but rather as a flower from the soil. And the soil, for us strayed revellers, lies no doubt in another part of the world; we are far from home. With every passing day I come to feel surer that, after all, I still view the great fundamentals through the atmosphere of my native Poughkeepsie. It is well, I apprehend, that this should be so, and better that it should continue to be so. A woman who is approaching twenty-eight may becomingly devote some thought to the solid actualities of life; it is proper that she should begin to feel for firm ground beneath her feet—and the firmest of all ground is that offered by the land of her birth.

We drove to-day to Bagheria and Solunto. Aunt Juliana easily persuaded herself that the excursion would overtax her powers, and decided to remain behind. In any event, Mr. Jordan could not have been expected, as one of a party of five, to sit beside the driver. Mr. Bland has an immense feeling for villas, and I for classical remains; and Albert Jordan (despite his curious way of expressing—or, of withholding—himself) cherishes as pronounced a passion

for the mountains and the sea; so all three of us had cause for gratification, and the 24th of February, for me, at least, will ever remain a red-letter day.

The little Blennerhassett girl begged very prettily, yet pertinaciously, to go with us; and although Mr. Jordan insisted that I could in no degree fill the place of chaperon, Mr. Bland thought a point might be stretched. I rather dreaded the child, but really she behaved very well. A change has come over her—she has entered upon a new phase. Somebody or something has caught her at the psychological moment and she is transforming before our eyes. She is rising from a conception of her little college world to a conception of the world at large. To-day, for the first time since I have been meeting her, she left her college-pin aside, and she has learned to move among the beauties of art and of nature without the emission of a single war-cry. She told me, as we were bowling along the seashore, that only yesterday she had persuaded her parents—or her guardians—to take her out to La Favara, the remains of which, lying a mile or so inland, she enthusiastically indicated. All this is due, I suppose, to her reading of Marcellus Bland's story, which devotes several rather good chapters to the brilliant doings of the Emperor Frederick's court. If it be really Mr. Bland who has caught and tamed and transmogrified this

young hoyden, all that he needs is a little more currency to rank with Schiller and Scott as a benefactor of youth. Her whole attitude toward him has changed most amusingly; the deference and the apologetic remorse she displays set very well upon her, and have not yet begun to annoy him.

Of course the villas at Bagheria, from one point of view, are quite preposterous. I hope it was an amelioration of taste, rather than anything else, which caused their owners to abandon them. But Mr. Jordan was greatly taken by their fantastic sculptures, and I soon saw that he viewed all pleasure-seats, as well as many things besides, from the standpoint of his own fine new place in New England. He let fall many descriptive hints of this notable estate—the result, as it appears, of but three or four years of his own unaided efforts. Mr. Bland, in so far as I am able to learn, has no landed property and would find the care of such possessions irksome. His treasures are elsewhere. He enjoyed all the villas most heartily, however, as the possessions and responsibilities of others. I think our enthusiasm rose highest at the Villa Valguarnera, upon the terrace of which Mr. Jordan—who is vastly taken up with terraces—became quite lyrical. It was a moment of the most precious self-revelation, and I liked and admired him as never before. Mr. Bland, who made some refer-

ences to his native Hartford, was far from being vivid or convincing.

Then we drove up the hill-slope to Solunto, where the compact brown ruins of the little old Roman town were awaiting us with all composure. And on this height the sunset found us. Here, through the golden-purple haze, Cape Zaffarano called across the bay to Monte Pellegrino, and far below us Palermo la Felice—the Happy City—rose from the shining cincture of the Conca d'Oro. Little Maribel looked out over the wide prospect with eyes that seemed to say, "Why have I never seen the world before?" And at a certain angle of one of those straight and narrow little streets Albert Jordan laid his long slim hand upon one of those immemorial brown blocks, and looked me in the face very calmly, and told me that he had had an idea.

"I see a new play," he said. "It will be no kid thing; and it will be no home-spun thing, either. It will treat of grown men and women out in the big world." He smiled a crooked, whimsical smile, but there was a little tremor in his voice.

I apprehended a moment of exaltation, and did not ask him the source and nature of his sudden idea. I cannot credit the foolish old pleasaunces of Bagheria with it, nor can I relate it to the long-dead stones of Solunto. Ah, well, the alchemy of genius—and Albert

Jordan is probably a genius, in his way—must ever clude all our little tests and formulæ.

February 26.

This afternoon the Battle of Flowers in the grounds of La Favorita, at the base of Monte Pellegrino. Albert Jordan asked me to drive with him, and as I had the proper frock and hat, I accepted without hesitation. He had had the light vehicle very tastefully decorated and had provided plenty of flowers, and he handled the ribbons over a strange horse with much skill and composure. He had picked up—I know not how—all the vocabulary needed to urge or to restrain the creature; he would have found it hard, he explained facetiously, to sit still and "just be driv'." The day was lovely and the occasion perfect of its kind. Admission to the enclosure was by ticket, and there was no bandying of bedraggled flowers that had been forced back into service by street gamins clinging to the steps of one's carriage, as at Nice or Monaco.

"It isn't hilarious; it isn't overcrowded!" said Albert Jordan through his twisted lips, as the two lines of equipages drove back and forth decorously. "But it *is* choice."

He appreciated the quality of it all most acutely. Why should I have assumed that he would give the

preference to quantity—to the measure, pressed down and running over, of a rabble rout in a wide metropolitan avenue?

Maribel Blennerhassett, forced down a peg or two from her recent lofty stand by the festal nature of the occasion and its opportunities for unconventional merriment, appeared in a large and elaborately decorated conveyance with a party of her young friends. Mr. Bland was among them. He threw flowers with a carefully calculated abandon, but seemed out of place and rather unhappy.

The *corso* was not crowded, neither was the pace rapid; and presently Albert Jordan began to talk about his play. I, meanwhile, sped a few perfunctory flowers at attentive passers-by, tossing a nosegay to Mr. Bland, who looked rather foolish (whatever the admiring gaze of Maribel Blennerhassett might say) in a neck-chain of anemones. The first act of the new drama was already sketched out. "And later on," the author declared, waving his beribboned whip over the shifting assemblage, "there shall be something like this—only much more so, of course."

"You are going to let me have your idea?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; presently, presently; not in this madding crowd. Later on; when the hurly-burly's done. In

fact, there will be several points where you can help me, if you will."

If I will! Well, I have seen something of the world, fortunately; and so, by this time, has he. It is a rich, complicated place, and I shall watch with interest his gallant endeavor to make something of it. Simply to save him from mistakes would be a service. Here, no doubt, are the "several points"; but we shall be clever and wary enough to weather them.

The idea, then, remains, thus far, undeclared. But as we ambled along he imagined for me a Battle of Flowers at Beaver Falls, with Uncle Jed Parsons, the hero of forty Fourth-of-July parades and of innumerable county fairs, as chief marshal. It was very exhilarating, but I should be quite willing for him to fit his instrument with new strings. I think he means to.

It is unlikely that I shall try for Malta. The steamer from Syracuse is very small, I am told, and the passage most trying. Mr. Bland, I must confess, has rather disappointed me; and, in any event, "The Grand Master" is a thing of the past. I find myself in close touch with the tingling actualities of the present, and feel that I shall do better service by remaining here.

VI

(FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALBERT JORDAN)

PALERMO, *March* 2, 1903.

THE blow, dear Arthur, has fallen. At last the single "admirer" has come up and touched my coat-sleeve with her forefinger and called me "It." The forefinger belongs to Miss Matthews—if you ever thought me backward about coming forward, think so no more. I don't know what she sees in me; but it is there, and she sees it. I must take her word for it. Our engagement is an accomplished fact, and our marriage will follow presently.

You may ask how the event occurred, and you are entitled to know. It took place yesterday within a certain old Saracenic pavilion on the edge of the town. There was a floor mosaicked in peacocks, and a fountain in good running order, and a series of mottoes which, Her Divine Intelligence said, were in the old Cufic text. I am not a bit versed in Cufic, but a clairvoyant flash helped me to read all those mottoes on the instant. The first one said, "Faint Heart never won Fair Lady." The second said, "Bachelors are the Poorest Sort of Horned Cattle." The third said, "Be Prompt and you will be Happy." The

fountain, too, was babbling rather foolishly, and I babbled along with it. My observations, halting as they were, had the good fortune to please my only auditor, and the trick was done.

"And now, my dear girl," I said immediately after —"and now, my dear girl"—yes, sir; just as bold as that—"what is your really truly name?"

She hesitated for a moment and blushed a little, and then told me what you probably know perfectly well already. Her name is not "Addolorata"; neither is it "Addie." It's Dora.

Dora. There! "Good," said I. "I like 'Dora' extremely. There's no letter I enjoy writing more than capital D. So 'Dora' it stands."

She shrugged slightly. "My pose is over. Let us banish the exotic. Henceforth we will rest upon the realities."

I dined last night at her hotel, taking the realities in six courses. Marcellus Bland hailed us befittingly. The dowdy old lady at Dora's other elbow broke out quite bravely in dinner dress and found the right things to say. It may be, after all, that I am on the edge of "society." You are acquainted in Poughkeepsie, and may know as well as I do; perhaps better.

We shall probably be married toward the end of the month, in Rome—if various legal formalities,

of which I have heard fearsome tales, can be satisfied within so short a time. Our consul shall tell me tomorrow; and you, my faithful Arthur, shall be advised with the least possible delay. Meanwhile there are other points a-plenty. With regard to the terrace at Cobblestone Corners, Stanhope will have to work in a few more pedestals; Dora will see about the statues as we pass through Florence. Relative to a herd of cattle, I shall do nothing hasty; Dora may prefer a bunch of longhorns from the Roman Campagna. Please contract at once with some reliable nurseryman for a dozen stone-pines, to be placed in carefully arranged disorder—they are her favorite tree. Also kindly communicate with the chief of the U. S. Coast Survey and tell him to raise the Long Island hills four or five hundred feet. At the same time he may change the waters of the Sound to a blue about three shades deeper.

One word more. I am up to my neck in a new play. It will be a winner. The idea is immense, and we have the first act blocked out, and all the notions for the second. I mean to show the world that I am no longer a juvenile, nor a hayseed. This time we tackle good society—New York society, as being the only sort that the American public much cares for. There will be costumes and furnishings, never fear; we shall try to be discreetly swell without being

tawdry. The "upper classes," my boy, have hearts and feelings, and we must try to find our way to them, both on the stage and off.

As one means of preparation, we shall try to see some society on the way home. We shall reach Florence about the middle of April for what Dora calls the "stagione brillante," and we are hoping to do justice, later, to Paris and London. I shall land at New York with the thing as good as written; it will be pulled off in November, and Cobblestone Hall (as Dora may prefer to call it) will be a very jolly spot, believe me, about next Christmas.

For our wedding at the embassy in Rome I should naturally have preferred you as best man; but you are many miles away and cumbered with many cares —mine, as well as your own. Bland, whom you admire, and to whom we may conceive ourselves as under obligations, will be asked to take your place. He has lost an old disciple, but he has gained a new one. Little Miss Blennerhassett is taking him up like a sponge that has just learned of the existence of water. Under cover of her attentions and exactions the defection of Miss Dora Matthews passes almost unnoticed. Have I done Bland a kindness? Or have I played the poor fellow something of a trick? If the latter, all the more reason

for asking his participation in the little affair at the embassy.

Dora joins with me in best regards.

Yours, as ever, A. J.

VII

(FROM THE JOURNAL OF MARCELLUS BLAND)

NAPLES, *March* 23.

How sweet is obscurity! How charming, after all, is neglect! How odious, on the contrary, is adulation grown rampant! How calamitous to have pressed an electric buzzer that will not cease even when one's finger is removed. Miss Blennerhassett, in brief, has been too much for me. She showed no sign of leaving Palermo, so I left instead. Jordan tells me I "awoke her mind." But it was a mind like the bottomless pit. Nothing could fill it. The ravenous young creature seized on everything I wrote. She was bent on an instant assimilation of everything I knew. She took all my time and all my knowledge. I fled; now let me rest in peace.

Miss Matthews writes to me pleasantly from Taormina about the play. Jordan is there, too, of course—and adds a postscript. I gather that she is to initiate him into the mysteries of "society." Well, the

acute consciousness of a comparative outsider will perhaps be of more service to him than the dulled perceptions of one to the manner born. Still—to avoid any injustice—she *may* be that *lusus naturæ*, a social personage with some concern for the things of the mind.

I go to Rome on the 30th for their wedding. It is sudden, but Jordan is a man of decision. At one time I fancied that he slighted me, but now all difficulties are removed and no understanding could be more complete.

As for his bride to be, she will think more highly of me when she learns that I have spent a week to the southward and have finally seen Malta. It is quite what I expected, and substantially as I described it. My intuitions are never at fault. As regards their own affair, I divined its whole course at the moment of their first meeting in the Villa Giulia. When one's intuitions are in such satisfactory working order what need to indulge in the laborious accumulation of mere facts?

THE HOUSE-CAT

THE HOUSE-CAT

I

The first thing young Stoughton did upon entering Madame Gallini's drawing-room was to put a shining black toe under fat, sleek, drowsy Taddeo and dislodge him from his warm berth beside the stove.

"He looked too comfortable," remarked Stoughton to old Mr. Pinfield, the only other boarder present.

Alonzo Pinfield bowed dumbly, and then, readjusting himself to the evening lamp, returned to the big fragrant pages of the *Sera*. His eight years with Madame Gallini had habituated him to casual remarks from talkative young strangers. These often dispensed with introductions and within a week or so went on their way. Yet if the old gentleman had been one of the *illuminati*—if he had enjoyed the gift of welcoming intimations or had possessed the faculty of cultivating intuitions—the simple action of Leonard Stoughton would have risen to the dignity of an omen, would have taken on some of the fine mysterious comprehensiveness of a symbol. Alonzo Pinfield, however, like many of the rest of

us, had but an ordinary mind; if ever he were wise at all, it was only after the event.

Taddeo, with a *miau* of protest, walked round the stove and laid himself down again in the same spot. Stoughton, who had fallen into a big easy chair and had begun to wonder what his first dinner in this new pension might develop, smiled on the lazy creature with quizzical malice. Alonzo Pinfield gave no further sign of hearing or of seeing, yet the intelligent performance of the old cat must have made its impression on his subconscious self; registered, tucked away in the capacious storeroom which each of us possesses, the memory of that feline promenade round the heater and of that prudent, comforting return to the original spot awaited the hour when a lowering of the subliminal threshold should lift it to conscious efficacy and should provide, at a trying juncture, a rule of conduct and a principle of action.

II

Alonzo Pinfield had always made life a matter of the baldest objectivity. It was a thing outside, an affair apart; and the farther off he was able to keep it the better he was pleased. In earlier days it had rather crowded him; its importunities had been little short of unseemly. Once or twice love and

matrimony had threatened; yet he had been able to remain a bachelor. A little later business complications had ensued; but he had succeeded in evading them and had put his few modest investments where others might make them their concern. Presently America itself became too pressing, too exigent, and he had transferred himself from New England to Tuscany. Florence was finished; the municipality made no great demands on the time and efforts of its own citizens, and still less on those of sojourning strangers. All the great questions had long since been settled; all the "growing pains" of an earlier and more energetic day were completely at an end. In a kind of still and breathless Saint Martin's summer one might dwell composedly upon the great and stormy past, tolerably certain that no sudden wind would come to turn one's cloak inside out and snatch one's hat from one's serene forehead and send one scurrying in undignified haste to cover.

And so Alonzo Pinfield, at the age of fifty-five, was lodged with Madame Elizabeth Gallini, Via Solferino, and with quiet tenacity was holding the world, with all its cares and complications, at arm's length.

He acknowledged that men and women put him out—they were always getting in his way. He enjoyed nothing better than a stroll through an empty street. His constant rule of guidance was to have as

simple relations as possible with as few people as possible; and the fundamental tone of his character was to be found in a kind of dull resentment at the terms on which, apparently, life must be lived.

"One might easily imagine a more comfortable world than this," he now and then said to himself.

Pension Gallini stood in a short street of villas and gardens, with Arno and Cascine both close at hand and the banker's but ten minutes away. The river and the park were both his; his too, by a kind of prescriptive right, a certain arm-chair in an inner room at the bank. His bedroom, thanks to the adroit placing of a screen, also provided him with a sort of antechamber; and the dining-room possessed a small alcove to which passing tourists seldom penetrated. Alonzo carried on his work in his antechamber and dined with more or less seclusion in his alcove. Madame Gallini knew his tastes and his ways and humored them; briefly, he led the private life as successfully as a pension-dweller in modest circumstances and a foreign land could hope to do.

"No, I shall not move *this* year," he would say to himself with every recurring October.

Most people supposed Alonzo to be engaged on a large work about Italian literature. Alonzo supposed so too. He read a good deal, both in current doings and in the classics; and now and then he

would put pen to paper and add a few sheets to a pile kept in a retired drawer. But there was no hurry, and the thought of actual publication was little less remote than the day of judgment.

Alonzo's chief concern, however, was not letters; it was genealogy. He had brought his family tree abroad with him and he cultivated it assiduously. Heaven knows that not the slightest bourgeoning had occurred, or was likely to occur, on Alonzo's own particular branch; but buds on other branches were always welcomed and often anticipated, and his eye glistened perennially as his comprehensive gaze took in the rotundity and massiveness of the whole arboreal growth. This vast example of fruitfulness comprised a numerous clan, and there was no chance that the least of all the Pinfields, between Worcester and Northampton, could escape their distant kinsman's consciousness.

One more point of importance: the Pinfields, besides being numerous as the sands of the sea, were as sturdy and respectable as the everlasting hills. One and all they were patterns of propriety, models of the solid domestic virtues. That he had not been able to get along with them was perhaps his fault rather than theirs. Though they had failed to please him as items in his daily life, they still interested him as entries in the big tome of family history. He him-

self had put them all into a fat volume which stood, among many similar ones, on a shelf above his desk; and neat pen-and-ink entries, here and there, chronicled the recent arrival of grandsons or of great-nieces. Yes, he was vastly proud of his family. Not all of them were easy to get on with: Uncle Hosea was overbearing and Cousin Joshua was "near"; but one and all they were honest, moral, respectable.

All? Well, perhaps not. The big tree rounded out beautifully—save on one side. A single undeveloped branch represented Brother Basil, who had left for the West in the early '70's and had never fully accounted for himself. Basil had written a few times during the earlier years, and then the absorbing life of a new country had proved too much for his powers as a correspondent. Alonzo could only hope that Basil had married honorably, like a veritable Pinfield, and that time would disclose, in due course, a lusty, full-leaved limb all ready to add to the hither side of the Pinfield tree.

Yet—Basil had been "different": very individual and adventurous, all agreed; "hifalutin," as Aunt Deborah disdainfully insisted; shot through with a thread of fantastic chivalry, as Alonzo himself, moved by the spirit of fraternal charity, was always ready to maintain. When his thoughts turned toward his absent and silent brother, Alonzo would shake

his head, and then, taking down the big book of the Pinfields, would pensively contemplate an empty page and wonder what . . .

III

THERE came a sharp knock at Stoughton's door. "You haven't gone to bed, have you?" asked a resonant young voice outside.

"That you, Tillinghast? No; come in."

"Where in the world have you been?" asked Tillinghast Hythe, on the threshold. He was the other half of an inseparable pair.

Stoughton cast aside his book and rose negligently from his easy chair. A few flickers from his fantastic spirit played across his mobile face. "I have been passing the evening with Brother Basil," he said.

"With——?" began Hythe. It was he who contributed the solidity and the positiveness to the partnership. Stoughton provided the freakishness and the fancy.

"With Uncle Alonzo, perhaps I should say. For, know one thing: you may never have suspected it, but I am Brother Basil's boy!"

"Ah!" sighed his friend with resignation, as he sank into a place on the sofa and waited patiently for further enlightenment.

"'Behold your long-lost nephew!'—those words were on my lips a dozen times during that hour in Mr. Pinfield's study," murmured Stoughton, with a fine air of abstraction. "I shall think the thing over during the night and perhaps let Uncle Alonzo know the fateful truth first thing to-morrow morning."

"Oh, you've been spending the evening with the old gentleman who dines in the alcove—is that it?"

"Yes. We have been deep in New England genealogy. He has been telling me all about his family."

"I see. Carrying coals. And you—you told him all about yours?"

"What! In one evening? No. Besides, I have none."

"You? No family? Why, if ever a tribe had branches and ramifications, if ever a fellow had ancestors to——"

"To burn? Some of them *were* disposed of all right, back in the seventeenth century, weren't they? I could have spared a few more. I have been brought up on family chronicles; I have sat for years under a family tree that rivals the banyan. I'm tired of it all. To-night I've been sitting under the Pinfield tree, and I like it better. I'm going to stay there for good. I mean to deny my father and mother, and——"

"Humph!" rejoined Hythe, to whom his friend's

mood was now declaring itself. "Deny, if you will. But you remain, as before, the most Stoughtonesque of all the latter-day Stoughtons: your father's walk and voice; your mother's eyes and hair——"

"Nay, I have no mother," said Leonard Stoughton sadly. "She disappeared years ago. I think she was some wild and wayward maiden out in Colorado. I'm not sure; I never knew her."

"H'm," returned Hythe. "I think your mother lives on Maplewood Avenue, Lynn, Massachusetts, and that she is the president of the Women's Provident Society and recording secretary of the Ibsen Club, and that you have seen her three-hundred and sixty-five days in the year for a good part of your life."

"And father, now?" mused Stoughton from the depths of his chair, ignoring Hythe's generous data. "I have often wondered what *he* might be like—where he lived, what he occupied himself with, what views he held . . ."

"Your father," replied Hythe, "'occupies himself' with the manufacture of shoes. I would remind you, too, that he is president of the Pohasset National Bank, and treasurer of the Voters' Reform League, and——"

"I have heard all that *said*," returned Stoughton dreamily. "You would maintain, then, that Mr.

Lucius Grosvenor Stoughton is, on the whole, what might fairly be called a good citizen—solid, trustworthy, public-spirited?"

"None more so."

"H'm! A perfectly respectable man?"

"I should say as much!"

"Well, I seem to be tiring of respectability. His domestic life, now?"

"Is of the happiest," answered Hythe, helping his friend along and awaiting due explanations. "As everybody says, he is the most-married man in his circle—the perfect pattern of matrimonial——"

"Alas," moaned Stoughton, "I almost fear that my parents were never married at all! Anyhow, it's weary work sitting under the tree where you belong. It's a good deal more interesting to sit under some tree where you don't belong. I've decided to make the change."

"The deuce you have!"

"Listen, now, while I tell you about Basil Pinfield. I have had his biography this very evening from the lips of Uncle Alonzo himself." Stoughton rose in his chair to the attitude proper for nervous and vigorous exposition and entertained his receptive friend for a good half-hour with the innocent babblings of the fond old man upon whose peace of mind he had resolved to prey.

"Now," he said, in conclusion, "you begin to see that Basil had 'notions.' Some years ago, when I was quite a little shaver, I used to awake suddenly at night and hear a loud voice going it in the far distance. Well, I know, now, what the noise was: it was Basil Pinfield, out in the mountains, ranting for free silver. Even nowadays I sometimes start up from a nap with a curious ringing in my ears. That's Basil Pinfield wheezing and whiffling over municipal ownership. I myself am a memento of a far earlier craze. Basil, at the period of his first philosophizings, believed in—well, in 'free union,' as I shall call it. A strain of generous Quixotism forbade him to drape the chains of matrimonial servitude round the form of any man—or of any woman; and I am the living testimony to his native dauntlessness of spirit. I've longed for years to be a 'natural son,' and now I'm going to find out how it seems."

"Oh-h!" returned Hythe, with relief. "At last I'm coming to recognize you: play-actor from your earliest teens, and chief pillar—in your day—of the Hasty Pudding Club! Good; but what are you doing it all for?"

"Doing it for? Why, this old Pinfield is too preposterously comfortable—it hasn't taken me three days to discover that. He has no duties, and no obligations. His landlady coddles him; his land-

lady's flower-faced daughter pets him outrageously——"

"Then you *have* noticed the flower-faced daughter? I had an idea you were overlooking her."

"Not a bit. And all the rest of us have to adjust ourselves to his likes and dislikes and to his habits and ways. I'm going to rout him from his cushion of ease. I've found his weak spot— I'm going to stab his pride in his family respectability. Look at me. I am his kith and kin; I am the blot on his scutcheon. This will be the first vial of wrath, and I shall empty others as fast as I find them. True, I call myself 'Stoughton,' but for that name I am indebted to the kindly old couple (I haven't quite worked this out, yet) who adopted me at Colorado Springs, or somewhere off there——"

"Oh, *that's* the way you turn to account your fortnight in Colorado last summer?"

"Local color, yes. But enough for to-night. Go; leave me in my misery—oh, if you could but know how ashamed and desolate I feel! Go!"

IV

"Uncle is coming around to it," Stoughton was able to report a few days later. "When the moment came I was able to produce just the right shade of

affectionate regard—long deferred, and to show just the proper degree of passionate shamefacedness. The 'local color' flared up beautifully; I was very graphic and circumstantial. Of course it was all something of a jolt, but I have an idea that Uncle Alonzo has long been braced for such a disclosure; he even gave me the impression of being thankful that I was as I am—the new relative, you know, might have been a good deal worse. Well, I was thoroughly convincing, and I think that before long I shall be 'acknowledged.'"

"And what then? You're not going to do the prodigal, the spendthrift?"

"Far from it. My sole concern shall be to show myself the Perfect Nephew—perfect, that is, except for one very serious drawback; so perfect, in fact, that within a week poor Alonzo Pinfield will be saying, with tears in those old blue eyes of his: 'Oh, my dear Leonard, why didn't your parents——?' or else: 'Ah, if you had only been born in——!' or something like that. And the first thing I shall say to him will be: 'Oh, my dear uncle, why have you never married yourself? In Florence, too—pre-eminently the town of the cultivated spinster. To remain single here—oh, fie!'"

"Yes, spinsters are plenty," agreed Hythe. "Two more came this forenoon. One of them was rather nice."

"'One of them,' then, must be his," declared Stoughton promptly. "The mature single woman is his chief dread. When I took that long walk with him day before yesterday, in the Boboli Gardens, he expressed himself about her very pointedly."

"Well, go on with the game," said Hythe. "The more variety the better. I have been in livelier towns and in livelier circles. Why are we two in a boarding-house, anyhow—we of all others?"

"Because your Aunt Bell was here two years ago, and was made 'comfortable.' As if 'comfort' covered all the interest in life! No! Not a bit of it. As for me, give me stir!"

"Stir away," said Hythe.

Alonzo Pinfield, after a few days of dumb, aching mortification, recovered from the violent lurch in his equable life and accepted his new relative. The young man's credentials were scanty, but they were bolstered up by a body of cleverly contrived reminiscence; the wide sweep of a ready histrionism helped still further, and a vivid and engaging personality did the rest. And beyond all these was Alonzo's latent belief—held through many years—that Brother Basil, with his peculiar notions, would some time or other be "heard from." The young man was acknowledged as an irregular and erratic shoot from the great family tree of the Pinfields, and was even

invited to assume the family name. The finer details of the matter, Alonzo decided, need not be gone into —least of all with Madame Gallini, whose consideration her lodger highly prized; and he thanked Fate for having determined that this new tie should be taken up abroad rather than at home—in a city of strangers a simple declaration would suffice.

During the memorable walk through the Boboli Gardens, innocent Alonzo had opened himself on a wide variety of subjects. He had given the young man some further account of the idiosyncracies, more or less unendurable, of his new relatives; and he had even gone on—assured by Stoughton's very evident and very gratifying command of means—to offer a tolerably comprehensive statement regarding his own financial interests.

"Oh, those simple little investments!" Stoughton laughingly reported to Hythe. "They are scarcely less than idyllic!"

"Spare them, then," said the other.

"No," returned Stoughton hardily. "I shall attack both his heart and his purse. But his heart first."

If Alonzo Pinfield's mainstay had been an innocent pride in his family, his chief rule of action was an excessive caution in his dealings with the female sex—especially with such members of it as were leaving youth behind. Alonzo had not lived his

fifty-five years for nothing, and he knew that the lady of the later thirties was the hardest of all to get along with. She was so prone to welcome the slightest advance; and not only to welcome it—to magnify it, to misconstrue it. She would not allow one to entreat her kindly as a fellow human creature; no, it was a life-partnership or nothing. She could rise so rapidly on the wings of ecstatic expectation, and then forget so completely that the friendly old earth was awaiting her return. Alonzo still held recollections of ladies who had insisted upon arguing far too broadly from facts that were all too slender and who could not be made to see that a slight advance did not imply a momentum which must necessarily push the advance to the far verge of a hard-and-fast conclusion.

And if such a danger threatened through the world at large, how much more threatening was the danger here in Florence, the chosen habitat of the single woman no longer young! For her the tender doings of the blessed Angelico and the warm pages of the no less blessed Ruskin were but filling in the time till a more serious and satisfying hour might strike. Alonzo knew his peculiar dangers and had resolved to walk warily. He was nice to matrons and to young girls, but with the sisterhood of the thirties he was caution itself. Though his air of restraint did little to add to the gayety of the house—and Madame

Gallini, cheery soul, desired nothing so much as that her hall and stairway and *sala* should be in perpetual fête—not a jot of criticism fell to his share. "He is cool, yes," said the worthy lady; "but so correct, so correct." Miss Rosalba Gallini, whom he had known in short dresses, gave no thought to any possible coolness, but went on considering, as always, that "Uncle Pinfield" was a "perfect old dear"; while his own attitude toward her was almost parental.

Judge, now, whether or no Alonzo Pinfield was disconcerted when, at dinner, a few evenings later, Miss Clumber, who was the more deserving—which means, the more attractive—of the two recent arrivals, greeted him, as he passed to his place, with a bow and a smile of somewhat marked character. It was all obviously meant as an acknowledgment of —of what? Alonzo Pinfield unfolded his napkin and searched his heart. He had met Eunice Clumber but once or twice and had never given her anything beyond a word of commonplace civility, yet now her intent dark eyes and her firm lips and her whole plump and comely person seemed bent upon giving emphasis to some incipient understanding. What could she mean?

He did not see, though Leonard Stoughton did, that she was wearing a flower or two at her breast.

He did not know, though Stoughton did, that the flowers were part of a big nosegay that had come to her with the respectful compliments of Alonzo Pinfield himself. Eunice Clumber had been for some years of that sorority which convenes in the painted void of Tuscan chapels and communes, "Mornings in Florence" on lap, with slender and débonnaire young saints. The void, though highly decorated and pointedly intellectualized, existed all the same, and a bouquet, even from an elderly gallant, did much to render the vacuum less bleak.

This bouquet was but the beginning. Under the skilful manipulation of the new nephew—now fully acknowledged as such—Alonzo Pinfield and Eunice Clumber spent half their time together, and half of that time they were together alone. Stoughton, with the help of Hythe, of Rosalba Gallini, and of other young people in the house, organized excursion after excursion, participation in which could not but prove flattering to the older generation; yet these excursions had a way, one and all, of ending in the same general fashion: whether the little party went to a manufactory of majolica, or to a restored mediæval castle, or to a rustic religious festival, Alonzo Pinfield and Eunice Clumber would be left to find their way home together. "We thought you had gone on"; "we took the wrong corridor"; "we lost you in the

crowd"—such were some of the excuses and apologies with which the unfortunate pair, arriving on a belated train or tram-car, would be met at the entrance-hall of Casa Gallini. Alonzo Pinfield, despite all his caution, was rapidly becoming a squire of dames—or rather, and much more fatally, the squire of one particular dame. He felt that people were talking about him. Their looks said: "Well, well; and how are these attentions going to end?"

It was after the return from the castle of Vincigliata that Stoughton indulged in his first decided comments. He and his young friends had left poor Alonzo and Miss Clumber in some remote court or corridor of that laborious restoration of mediæval art and domesticity, had seized the larger of the carriages, and then, swinging down the slopes of the pine-set hill, had made a madcap return to the city. Alonzo and his companion, after losing valuable time in a conscientious search for their young associates, had reached home barely in time for dinner. In fact, sleek young Luigi was sounding the gong through the halls just as their conveyance drew up at the door, and the late-comers met the entire body of their commensals on the way from *sala* to dining-room.

"Oh, uncle!" whispered Stoughton to poor, embarrassed Alonzo; "this is most marked indeed!"

"Where were you?" asked the old gentleman. "What became of you?"

"Where were *you?*" retorted the young man boldly. "Really, uncle, a lady would be justified in expecting almost anything after—this!"

Alonzo sat through the meal with the merest shadow of an appetite. Had he known that a second bouquet was on its way to the lady's receptive hands, even the shadow might have vanished. And next day, when Eunice Clumber sped him a look of sweet yet determined confidence, he felt with a sudden alarm that the thing "indicated" for him was an immediate absence from Casa Gallini, if not indeed a complete withdrawal from Florence itself.

V

Yet one important consideration operated to hold him where he was: his nephew's growing partiality for Rosalba Gallini. The girl's mother, American by birth, encouraged the American tone throughout her establishment; and Rosalba herself, charming and ornamental young cosmopolite, could show the American tone in its full body and flavor whenever occasion might arise. Occasion arose as often as a prepossessing young man appeared from that wide Western world to which the dominant half of her

parentage was due—for Rosalba owed nothing of her florid blond beauty to her departed father—and impromptu relationships, marked by a breezy and light-handed freedom, would readily ensue. Rosalba had had, for one of her years, a large and varied social experience, and though she might sometimes begin by holding a candle for others she usually ended by herself becoming the centre of illumination. Very soon she was devising for young Stoughton little jaunts and excursions from which the elder element was altogether banished, and Stoughton himself, taking full advantage of his position as a near relative of an old friend of the house, met the enterprising girl more than half-way. Rosalba became exclusively American, all pretence of chaperonage being abandoned; and Alonzo Pinfield viewed the *rapprochement* between the young people with even more concern than he felt over the clinging appreciation of Eunice Clumber.

"This must not go too far," he declared anxiously. "I can't let it; I shan't let it. I think too much of Elizabeth Gallini; and, as for little Rosalba, it would be—shocking; it would amount to a betrayal."

But his efforts to stem the tide met with scant success. Elizabeth Gallini looked upon the partiality of passing young men for her child as almost a feature of the business—as an asset, so to speak;

Rosalba, though fully indurated to ephemeral attentions, was in a state of innocent delight over the vivacious assiduities of her newest cavalier; and Stoughton himself, little enough concerned about the mortifying stain on his descent, danced attendance with the steps of a jovial confidence and was beginning to develop, in his own whimsical fashion, a kind of serious regard. The two went about freely, finding entertainment—together—even in galleries and museums; and Hythe came to feel himself left as much behind and aside as Pinfield.

"How much longer do we linger in this Capua?" he asked Stoughton, one day. "We are supposed to be touring, and a tour, if you will believe me, involves the idea of motion from place to place."

"Capua pleases me well enough, old fellow. Doesn't it please you?"

"There are second tables in Capua as well as elsewhere. Don't imagine yourself the first to have tasted the delicate air of Casa Gallini."

"Take care!" responded Stoughton, with a touch of temper. "I feel myself able to wipe out the tracks of all previous travellers." Then, in a more friendly tone: "Let us compromise; I will remain here while you, now and then, make your little *Ausflüge*. Trip along, if you like, to Pisa or Bologna or Perugia ——"

"I am superseded, then? Dispensed with?"

"—And you'll find no footprints but mine when you return. Away with you; I am detained here awaiting important letters."

"Oh—letters? From whom?"

"Why, from the Wagawam Trust Company, of Worcester."

"What now?" demanded Hythe, eying his friend narrowly.

"Perhaps Dorry Sheldon will have a hand in them," Stoughton proceeded, with a ruminative eye artificially fixed on vacancy. "You remember Dorry, of course—how he flopped straight from college into business, and how he is learning to care for the investments of widows and minors and absentees; oh, nobody could be more beautifully fiduciary! Uncle Alonzo's little 'all,'" Stoughton added softly, "is in the hands of the Wagawam, and his solicitous nephew knows a good deal about it already."

"You're not going to keep on worrying that poor old man, I hope. What has he done to you? He's been quite pleasant to both of us."

"Perhaps he has," admitted Stoughton reluctantly.

"Enough is enough, it seems to me."

"Well, what's begun . . ." submitted the other, with some slight diminution of his native gayety.

"And you're not going to get Theodore Sheldon into trouble?"

"I don't think he'll grudge me a letter-head or so—I presume I can arrange the rest of it myself. I wrote to him two or three weeks ago," Stoughton added in a tone between explanation and defence.

"Call it off."

"How can I? There's our family motto:—'Persevere.' Shall I be false to that?"

"Perseverance is one thing and insistence is another. *That* gets tiresome—all around."

"Possibly," conceded Stoughton, with a half-sigh. "But can I stop now? Come; run away to Monte Carlo and enjoy yourself. As for me, I am obliged to remain here, in hourly dread of news of the most disquieting nature. *Va!*"

In token of his great concern he immediately ordered a cab and spent the afternoon at Doccia, looking at Capodimonte pottery with Rosalba Gallini. They brought back two or three large and showy pieces, which were set on the tail of the Érard grand in the *sala*. To the excited imagination of Alonzo Pinfield it all seemed like a display of wedding-gifts, and he went in to dinner in a state of high alarm.

"Oh, heavens!" he groaned, as he moved stumblingly to his accustomed place in the alcove, "it

must never be. Oh, Basil, Basil! why couldn't you have thrown away your 'ideas' and have lived like other people?"

Then, recalling how Eunice Clumber had bowed so admiringly over those florid examples of the potter's art and had so smilingly invited him to share her pleasure, he cast away knife and fork and refused all comfort.

VI

"I SHALL have to leave at once for Genoa—I must catch to-morrow's steamer for New York."

Alonzo Pinfield, with a crumpled letter in his trembling hand, came up to Madame Gallini in the small space, under the first turn of the stairway, that served her for a "bureau." His face was ashy pale and his poor old legs could scarcely sustain him.

"Why, my dear Mr. Pinfield . . ." began the good woman, all concern.

"I have bad news from America," he gasped. "I must start without an hour's delay."

Stoughton, lingering in the drawing-room doorway with Rosalba, felt the first prickings of remorse. "Why," he muttered to himself, "I supposed the most he would do would be to write—or to cable."

"But, dear uncle," cried Rosalba, starting across

to him, "you are not really going to leave us like this?"

Stoughton put forth a restraining hand. "Dear me, no," he murmured to the girl; "I sha'n't let him get farther than the railway-station."

Alonzo, overborne as he was by the newest and sharpest of all his recent troubles, still had eyes and ears for every developing phase of this youthful intimacy. Judging by the young man's open air of proprietorship, it had now reached a very advanced stage—nothing but a formal avowal seemed to remain.

"Yes, I must get away at once," he repeated hurriedly, his glance still resting anxiously on the young pair. "I can pack my things in half an hour."

"But you will be back among us within a month or so?" suggested Madame Gallini.

"I don't know, yet. I don't really know anything."

"Ah, but you must be here—for the wedding, you know."

"The—wedding! Whose?"

"Mine," said Stoughton boldly. "Ours," he added, taking Rosalba's hand with a light touch of ceremonial gallantry.

"It happened only this morning," Elizabeth Gallini explained fondly. "You won't slight Rosalba? You won't be indifferent to your own nephew?"

Alonzo sank into the nearest chair and looked up piteously at this palpitating parent. "Please tell Luigi to order a cab—I must go," he said faintly. "And let me have a few moments' talk with you in your own sitting-room."

Elizabeth Gallini had lived abroad long enough to gain a general familiarity with Continental society and to understand that few were the lines of descent without their own awkward breaks and angles; but she still remained sufficiently American to appreciate Alonzo Pinfield's ideals of social purity and to meet understandingly enough his passion for the utmost regularity in genealogical records. As he poured out the moving tale of Brother Basil's eccentricities her own American conscientiousness throbbed in unison with his; and when tears appeared in Alonzo's eyes, tears in her own accompanied her declaration that he was the dearest old man in the world.

Yet Leonard Stoughton, in the eyes of Elizabeth Gallini, was a wonderfully fine young fellow. Why, she asked herself impatiently, was it upon the "love-child's" graceless head that one always found placed the aureole of brilliancy, of cleverness, of esprit? The least that she could do for this engaging young man was to let him speak for himself.

And Stoughton, thus summoned, seeing his future happiness imperilled by his own fantastic and per-

verse ingenuity, shrugged with a divine and insolent impatience and summoned, in his turn, Hythe.

"Tell them, Tillinghast," he said, as he stood half-abashed before the solicitious eyes of Rosalba's mother and the tremulous shame of poor Alonzo. "*I* feel too flat for words."

And Hythe, with some sense of his share in the over-persistent cruelties of his friend, confessed the fictitious foundling from Colorado and the fraudulent letter from Massachusetts and even the impertinent bouquets presented to Eunice Clumber.

"You were too comfortable," stammered Stoughton, in shamefaced apology to his victim.

"And who called on you, you cruel boy, to act as judge?" There was the ring of indignation in Elizabeth Gallini's voice, but there was also a kind of admiring smile on her face. Stoughton knew she was forgiving him, and felt sure that he would be considered—and accepted—in any light or guise under which he might elect to present himself.

Alonzo, weaker and more broken than ever, after the reaction, leaned back limply in his chair and acknowledged himself as utterly spent.

"Countermand the cab," said Madame Gallini to Stoughton; "and let us help this poor, dear, old gentleman to his room."

And with all possible kindness she saw Alonzo put to bed.

Eunice Clumber came to his door and begged to be allowed to assist in the nursing.

"No, no, no," said Alonzo, and turned his face to the wall. And Elizabeth Gallini shut the door.

"My dear Ophelia," said Miss Clumber to her friend, in the privacy of their own chamber, "believe me or not, but he is an—*old man*. If you could have seen his face! Yes, old—and querulous and selfish. . . . Let us leave for Rome to-morrow." And they went.

Alonzo was soon himself again. Elizabeth Gallini, now according the real Stoughton an acceptance still more eager than before, was in the mood to enwrap her tortured old friend with a double allowance of those *petits soins* which had come to be a necessity to his existence. It was only an evening or two later when he was again occupying his easy chair in the drawing-room; and presently Rosalba stole in to give a last soft touch to the pact of peace and reconciliation.

"Dear Uncle Pinfield, you *will* forgive him—for my sake?"

Alonzo had become too old and tame for anger or for indignation; he felt little beyond a dumb wonder that such ruthlessness could be. Even resentment,

though of the mildest shade, lay almost beyond his powers; besides, what greater foe to comfort than the stubborn nursing of a grudge? True, he had been made to circle the thrice-heated furnace of affliction; yet complete ease was in view at last. Why refuse it?

"And if you are *my* uncle," the girl went on caressingly, "you will be *his* uncle, too, after all, won't you?"

Alonzo turned and kissed her, and she stole out again. Then he spread the damp sheet of the *Sera* to the lamp-light and read on—to the accompanying purr of Taddeo, who lay in dozing ease at his feet.

THE END